



Fall 2008

University of Maryland
**LATIN
AMERICAN
STUDIES
CENTER**

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Briefly Noted	3
The Search for Africa in Latin America	4
Structural Genocide during the Vargas Era	6
Exchange Brings Brazilians to Maryland	8
Book Review: The 'Air of Liberty'	9
Religion and the Politics of Ethnic Identity	10
Faculty Review: Karin Roseblatt	11
Week of Mexico @ Maryland 2008	12
CONECTA: Bringing Artists Together	14
Winter in Latin America	15

On the Cover: *Watermelon*,
painting by Leticia Goulias.

Briefly Noted

Introducing Karen Caplan and James Maffie

James Maffie, LASC Visiting Professor

James Maffie (PhD, Philosophy, University of Michigan) specializes in contact-era Nahua (Aztec) philosophy. His other areas of interest include comparative world philosophy, epistemology and philosophy of the sciences. He studied Nahuatl in Zacatecas and in the Huasteca region of Mexico.

Professor Maffie is currently writing a book entitled *A World in Motion: Philosophical Explorations in Aztec Metaphysics*. He has published in *The Nahua Newsletter*, *Mesoamérica*, *Hypatia*, *Futures*, *Ludis Vitalis*, *History of the Human Sciences*, and contributed papers to *A Companion to Latin American Philosophy*, *The Ontology of Consciousness*, and *Science and Other Cultures*. He has also edited special issues of *Social Epistemology* devoted to topics in comparative world philosophy. Maffie is currently on leave from his position as associate professor, Department of Philosophy, Colorado State University.



Karen Caplan, Post-doctoral Student

Karen Caplan is Assistant Professor at Rutgers University-Newark, where she teaches Latin American history from 1492 to the present. Her own work is on the history of Mexico.

Her first book, *Local Liberalisms: Mexico's Indigenous Villagers and the State, 1812-1857*, is forthcoming from Stanford University Press. It explores how early nineteenth-century Mexicans in the states of Oaxaca and Yucatán—be they indigenous villagers, government officials, or local elites—worked to incorporate the institutions of liberalism into their daily political lives, and how the local liberalisms that they built interacted with a national liberal movement that often contradicted the bases of local agreements.

Caplan's new project, which she is working on while at the University of Maryland, addresses the role of poverty and inequality in the international development project, and, in particular, the role that poverty and inequality—both as ideas and as realities—have played in the particular development experience of Mexico.



James Maffie (center), with a group of exchange students from Latin America

Crossing the Water:

The Search for Africa in Latin America

By David Sartorius, Department of History

A few weeks before its Carnaval blowout every July, the city of Santiago de Cuba hosts the “Fiesta del Fuego” Caribbean festival. This past summer, I found myself chatting with the star attractions of its main parade just moments before a thunderstorm transformed that parade into a mad dash to the nearest drinking establishment. Several *cabildos* (Afro-Cuban religious and mutual aid societies) were marching, but the men of the *Cabildo San Pedrito* told me that they had been practicing their dancing and drumming for months because the crowd expected them to be the best of the bunch, “lo más africano” (“the most African”). The soon-to-be-soaked white costumes that they wore each year were fancier versions of the white clothing worn on special occasions and by new initiates in *santería*, the Cuban religious tradition with West African roots and analogs throughout Latin America.

Here was Afro-Cuban culture literally on center stage in the island’s second largest city, and I was overcome with questions that the *cabildo* members did not seem interested in answering: How did they identify with other festival participants of African descent from other parts of the Caribbean? How had they come to be a fixture in the Fiesta del Fuego? How old was their *cabildo*, and how had it survived various political transitions on the island? And then there were nagging questions I knew better than to ask: Did they consider themselves “black”? How did they pay for their costumes? What did they think of Raúl Castro? So I answered their questions instead—about Kanye West and Barack Obama, and if I happened to have a bottle of rum on me.

I couldn’t stop thinking about the many *cabildos* that had come before San Pedrito and the history of African-descended Cubans who have developed political and socioreligious institutions against difficult odds. I had spent the previous week in Santiago’s archives reading about state suppression of *cabildos* during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Waves of crackdowns coincided with increased public prominence for African-derived culture, first character-

ized as atavistic and criminal and later celebrated for its folkloric and touristic appeal. Thus despite this increased visibility, Afro-Cubans organized themselves amidst specters of black inferiority and pseudo-scientific curiosity that rarely squared with their lived experiences. Nearly a century later, the Cuban tourist industry has promoted Afro-Cuban culture with an eye to attracting tourists keen on an “inside” look at tropical socialism, but it insists on a version of Afro-Cuban culture more palatable to foreigners than responsible to the traditions themselves. Even though searches for cultural authenticity often fall short, questions still churn in my mind when I see performances like those of the *cabildos* at the Fiesta del Fuego, borne out of my reluctance to separate the ever-increasing celebration of the African presence in Latin America from historic patterns of discrimination and inequality.

In this current moment of robust interest in the African dimensions of Latin America, keeping the longer history in mind provides a critical perspective on the present. On the surface, it does not take much searching to find connections to Africa today, and not just in those parts of the region traditionally identified with slavery and blackness, such as Brazil and the Caribbean. Mexico, Peru, Ecuador, Colombia, and countless other places are the sites of political activism, literary and artistic endeavors, and scholarship dedicated to acknowledging the presence and contributions of people of African descent. There are also fruitful interactions across national borders, a prescient reminder that the African diaspora predated the political ascendancy of nation states. As a historian, I struggle to integrate these present-day activities with those of past generations of African-descended peoples, whose generative and improvisatory actions challenged a legacy of slavery whose meaning has hewed closely to themes of death, loss, and displacement. For every visible instance of cultural agency or political activism today, there are at least as many defeats, silences, and suppressed alternatives that often belie a history more painful than celebratory. What visions of Africa in the Americas have been forgotten, sidelined, destroyed,

blurred, to bring the images we have before us today into clear focus?

As a recurring motif in santería cosmology, crossing water can indicate movement between the worlds of the living and the dead, of humans and spirits, which is as fitting a metaphor for understanding the African presence in Latin America as the oceanic crossing that the phrase unavoidably connotes. Haunting, as Avery Gordon reminds us, can serve as a methodological approach as well as a subject of inquiry about “ghostly matters,” the pasts that live on in the present, if only in the shadows. It “draws us affectively, sometimes against our will,” into a search for traces of the past that are presumed to be extinct. It is this search that motivates so much recent scholarship on the African diaspora, the limits and possibilities of a transnational black identity, and on race and citizenship in Latin America. Rather than an exercise in mystification, attention to the hauntings of contemporary Afro-Latin America opens up interpretive possibilities: to visions of freedom that cannot be contained by national narratives of racial harmony, to cultural formations that resist the tourist gaze, and to the knowledge practices that have alternately marginalized, valorized, and commodified the region’s population of African de-

scend, its expressive traditions, and its labor.

But as we cross the water to link Africa and Latin America, we should remember that spirits are not necessarily evil; some linger to right wrongs and as reminders of past successes. These were the ghosts that may have been present in Santiago de Cuba last July. The specters of state repression might have mattered less to the Cabildo San Pedrito than the haunting of generations of santiagueros before them who fought hard for the survival of their associations and who might have been amazed to see African culture—such as it was represented—on display so prominently at the Fiesta del Fuego. The cabildo members had probably considered my blunt questions about material exploitation and political cooptation before, but perhaps those ghosts could be confronted on another occasion. At the festival’s climax, the men of the Cabildo San Pedrito already had enough rain on their parade to deal with.

Members of the Cabildo San Pedrito pose at the parade of the Fiesta del Fuego Caribbean festival in Santiago de Cuba, July 2008. Photograph by David Sartorius.



Structural Genocide during the First Vargas Regime, 1930 - 1945

By Owen Silverman Andrews

Structural Genocide is a term I derive from the theory of Structural Violence, which posits that subaltern groups are subject to the violence of shorter, more miserable lives than affluent sectors of society. For this derivative to be meaningful, two factors must come into play. First, the group targeted must be racial, or racialized. Second, malicious intent must be proven through investigation of specific actions and policies on the part of power players in a given society. During the first Vargas regime in Brazil (1930-45), the specific group targeted were Afro-Brazilians, and more broadly all “non-whites,” and the charge of intent is clearly corroborated in that administration’s policies of education, immigration, and international presentation.

Dispelling Brazil’s national myth of a racial democracy, Jerry Dávila (2003), Carmen Nava (1998, 2006), and others have thoroughly demonstrated the racialized atmosphere that pervaded Brazil’s public schools during the Vargas era. This setting, inherently segregated (wealthy whites attended elite private colegios), proved to be one of the primary locations of Structural Genocide. Not only were existing racial hierarchies and stereotypes reinforced through textbooks, choral singing, and even those giving the instruction (Dávila argues in *Diploma of Whiteness* that Rio’s teacher corps shifted from a race and gender diverse group to one composed of mostly phenotypically white women), but blackness itself, with all its associated stigmas, was presented as blemish on the national body that would soon fade into history. Poor, mostly afrodescendant children received fewer years of education and attended lower-quality schools, an indicator of Structural Violence, but they were also inculcated into a society that rejected blackness as backward, degenerate, and unclean. I argue that the attacks made on blackness in Brazil’s public schools during this period represented one of many intentional devices the Vargas regime used to stifle black consciousness and identification, effectively destroying the unwanted blackness and forging a white oriented national identity. The regime thus committed Structural Genocide, but did so in a typically Brazilian way, without physical, overt violence.

In his monograph on Vargas era immigration

policies, Jeffery Lesser writes: “Analyzing who was considered ‘nonblack’ or ‘nonwhite,’ however, leads to very different conclusions than examining who is ‘white’ or ‘black.’” (Lesser 1995 5) As with the eugenically-charged education policies discussed by Dávila and Nava, immigration policy was an arena where the Vargas regime sought not only to limit nonwhites from entering the Brazilian national body, but also to filter out impurities related to blackness. In the eyes of the Vargas regime, adherents to non-Christian religions and cultures, individuals of non-European heritage, and



“foreign ideologues” such as communists or associates of “international bankers,” threatened the progress and the ascent of the Brazilian nation with degeneracy and corruption. Drafted in 1934, Section 6 of the new Brazilian Constitution stated these intentions clearly, in black and white: “The entry of immigrants into the national territory will be subject to the restrictions necessary to guarantee the ethnic integration and the physi-

cal and legal capacity of the immigrant; the immigrant arrivals from any country cannot, however, exceed an annual rate of two percent of the total number of that nationality resident in Brazil during the preceding fifty years.” (Skidmore in Graham 25) Jews desperate to flee Europe, for example, were racialized in government documents such as Secret Circular 1,227, which defined Jews as “persons of ‘Semitic origin.’” (Lesser quoting Circular, 1995 92) Like all immigration policy, these acts not only regulated the influx of foreigners into Brazil, but also sought to define who was, and who was not Brazilian. Here Brazilian elites’ long-held hope of branqueamento (whitening) was refined and legislated by a powerful central government.

In *Culture Wars*, Daryle Williams details the “export” of officially sponsored, and censored, “Brazilian” culture to the world. As a rule, “on foreign



soil the steering committees who organized narrated Brazilian-ness abroad most often consciously tried to censor blackness and manual labor on the principle that foreign eyes needed to see a white and civilized Brazil.” (Williams 214) Realizing that the presence of blacks and blackness in Brazil was a detriment to the modern state they were hoping to build, the Vargas regime proceeded to present a white nation to the world,

so as to ingratiate Brazil with racist governments in Europe and North America and reflect this image back home. This was the next logical step in the Vargas regime’s Structural Genocide, and an important one. It was an exercise of state power in cultural and artistic patrimony. It was also intended to achieve the disowning of blackness by Afro-Brazilians that would, along with immigration policies and the “natural progression” of *mesticagem*, one day lead to a whiter, modern Brazil. Spectacles such as the New York World’s Fair of 1939 and the *Exposição do Mundo Português* of 1940 were sites of such suppression, spelling out an implicit racial hierarchy whose lower echelons were veiled to the world. Afrodescendant Brazilians were targets to be erased from the national identity abroad as well as at home, not through slaughter and bloodshed, but through a much more subtle and manipulative process involving minds, and ideas, and imagination.

The controversial lexicon of this argument invariably leads to certain questions. One of the foremost of these is usually: Is genocide the right word? Does the extension of this word to such cases dishonor other historical cases, most notably the Holocaust, by somehow invoking parity between the attempted slaughter of a people through physical violence, and the attempted erasure of a people through other, more subtle means? Presented properly, the concept of Structural Genocide can avoid diluting the term genocide, and the ire of victims of other genocides, by walking this thin line: genocide implies the destruction of a specific people, and it must be understood that there are many ways to go about such destruction. In the case of Vargas era Brazil, a powerful federal government targeted blacks and blackness through government policies in the fields of education, immigration, and international presentation. Educators banished blackness to the fading Brazilian past, bureaucrats in the Itamaraty sought to bar nonwhites from Brazil’s doors, and diplomats presented an image of Brazil more in line with future aspirations than current realities in order to situate Brazil within the community of white, modern states, and to reflect this identity back home. If the goal was to erase blackness and people’s identifications with blackness from Brazil, and these acts were carried out knowingly with this goal in mind, what other way may these policies be understood, except as a Structural Genocide?

Photo by Ricardo Moraes, AP Press. Followers of African-Brazilian religious sects participate in the celebration of Yemanjá’s day, an African water goddess, in Rio de Janeiro.

Exchange Brings Brazilians to Maryland

By Lowell Adams, Department of Environmental Science and Technology

One Saturday morning in August, nine tired but excited university students and a professor from the state of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, arrived in Maryland for a two-week exchange program focused on ecology and natural resources management.

Since 1993, UMCP's Natural Resources Management Program, Department of Environmental Science and Technology, and Office of International Programs have led a student exchange program between the states of Maryland and Rio de Janeiro. Every other year, a small group of Brazilian students and one or two faculty members come to Maryland to learn about its academic facilities, environmental NGOs, government agencies, and research foundations; in the intervening years, students and faculty from UMCP travel to Brazil. The travel-study program is a cooperative effort with Partners of the Americas, a "people to people" exchange program initiated by President Kennedy in the 1960s. The state of Maryland is partnered with the state of Rio de Janeiro because of similar characteristics; each has a large bay with surrounding development, among other common features.

Students learned about many UMCP departments, including the Office of International Programs, Latin American Studies Center, Maryland English Institute, Sustainable Development and Conservation Biology Program, and a variety of programs in the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources. Several students discussed research programs and opportunities for graduate study with professors individually. In an all-day field trip, the students walked the beaches of the lower Patuxent River, learning about a Gem-

stone research project focused on diamondback terrapins. Hosted by four Gemstone students, the Brazilians learned about efforts to protect turtle nests from mammalian predators with electric fences.

Participants were also able to visit a variety of off-campus locations. Federal installations included nearby Patuxent Wildlife Research Center, Great Falls National Park, and the National Park Service's Center for Urban Ecology. At Patuxent, students met Dr. Matt Perry and learned about his Chesapeake Bay sea duck research. They were fascinated by the dive tanks, where students could watch ducks diving and swimming underwater. At the Center of Urban Ecology, Ana, a former University of Maryland student and participant in the 2007 trip to Rio, compared Rock Creek Park in Washington, D.C. with Tajuca National Park in Rio.

Students also spent a half day visiting the Partners of the Americas headquarters in Washington. Other D.C. activities included a behind-the-scenes tour of several parts of the National Zoo and a visit to Conservation International, where students learned about conservation programs worldwide.

Cultural activities were also important: Maryland Partners hosted the group at a DC United soccer match and provided tickets to a Bowie Baysox baseball game, which was a real "American" experience for the Brazilians. The College of Agriculture and Natural Resources and its Department of Environmental Science and Technology hosted a joint Brazilian-German student reception. The German students were on campus for a summer wetlands study program, and the overlap of the two programs provided opportunities for interaction among students with diverse backgrounds.

On Friday, August 15, 2008, sad good-byes were exchanged. Everyone hated to see the trip end, but all looked forward to August 2009 when Marylanders will visit Brazil.



Brazilian and University of Maryland students on a Patuxent River beach in southern Maryland. The Brazilians spent one day learning about diamondback terrapin research being conducted by the "Saving Testudo" Gemstone team of the University of Maryland.

The 'Air of Liberty': Narratives of the South Atlantic Past

By Stacy Keogh

The Latin American Studies Center was honored to host Dr. Ineke Phaf –Rheinberger at the University of Maryland, College Park campus to introduce her newest book *The 'Air of Liberty'. Narratives of the South Atlantic Past* (2008).

Dr. Phaf is an independent scholar residing in Berlin, Germany and has been a research affiliate at the Latin American Studies Center at University of Maryland since 1998. During her stay in Maryland as a guest professor at the UMCP campus in the Fall Semester of 1989-1990, she witnessed the fall of the Berlin wall and began to ponder questions of how historical legitimacy and the process of democratization and cultural penetration would be discussed in studies on Latin American literature in the formerly 'divided' Germany. These questions eventually led Dr. Phaf to enjoy more intensively the programs on Culture and Democracy in the Latin American Studies Center (LASC) during her tenure at College Park thereafter.

The Air of Liberty explores the Portuguese-African roots of Latin American cultural development and uses the slave trade as a framework for how the transatlantic mercantile link and the initiation and development of African colonial contact contributed to economic and political development. In order to reveal this complex historical pattern, the (formerly) Dutch-related port communities in the Caribbean are conceived of as cultural agents whose 'lettered cities' (Ángel Rama) have engaged in critical dialogue with the heritage of the South Atlantic trade in human lives since the seventeenth century.

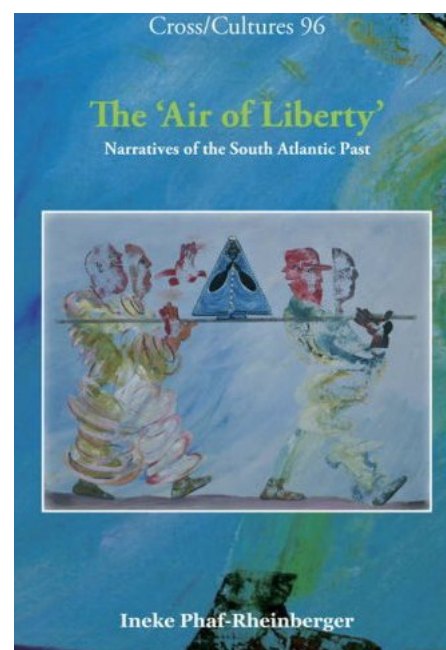
The book incorporates literature and visual representation as it provides rich cultural characterization to the Dutch colonization process as opposed to the calculated facts often generated by historians working on this period.

The methodological preparation for this work was grueling yet rewarding for Dr. Phaf. She reworked during 12 years revamping essays of different contributors to make them appropriate for a publication on Dutch-Caribbean literature. This made her aware of the fact that the reflection on democracy and political processes had to be constructed through historical backgrounds, systematized and interpreted to demonstrate how the characters in each of the literary ac-

counts responds to contemporary political culture.

The unique themes that were generated from this research allowed Dr. Phaf to organize an inter-university lecture series and seminars in Berlin that united the complex issue of race culture, colonialism, and post-modernism and brought it to the forefront of Latin American Studies. The results are published in her co-edited volume *AfricAmericas – Itineraries, Dialogues, and Sounds* (with Tiago de Oliveira Pinto, 2008). But where does this connection between Africa and America lie in general? Perhaps in ethnomusicology, performance art, African literature courses in Brazil, chronicles from colonial times, or using slave cultures as another insight into the origins of Brazilian, Caribbean, and Latin American cultural history.

Dr. Phaf's work aims to provide readers with a deeper understanding of the importance of the slave-trade. This "Atlantic system" functions as a salient element in the historical construction and maintenance of the mercantilist system on the globe. Furthermore, her books make a special contribution to African American studies as well as to the field of Latin American studies because they focus on the role and relevance of the Bantu cultures, which have had a long-term influence in the Americas, and of the Dutch-Caribbean contribution to the search of alternatives for colonizing patterns in past and present.



Book Review:

Religion and the Politics of Ethnic Identity in Bahia, Brazil

By Stacy Keogh

Stephen Selka *Religion and the Politics of Ethnic Identity in Bahia, Brazil*. Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2007. 175 pp.

In *Religion and the Politics of Ethnic Identity in Bahia Brazil* (2007), anthropologist Steven Selka explores the intersection between the racial and the religious identification processes in the Bahian region of Brazil. Within the cultural-religious subgroup of the Candomblé, Bahian nationalism is constructed by embracing black culture and using it as a source of empowerment. This identity conflicts with that of the conservative Christian groups that make up the majority of spiritual seekers in the region. Clinging to a diasporic perspective, Selka contends that “[t]he relationship between any particular religion and ethnic identity is discursively constructed; there is no inherent relationship between Candomblé and Afro-Brazilian identity” (2007: 122).

Candomblé is “based on a combination or fusion of similar religions associated with different African ethnic groups” (2007: 20) celebrating indigenous culture. Because of its Afro-indigenous demographic composition, members of the Candomblé tend to also be darker-skinned, and thereby exposed to more racial discrimination than their lighter-skinned Christian neighbors. “Christians” in Selka’s study incorporate two major influential religious groups: Catholics and evangelical Protestants. The Catholic response to Afro-Brazilian identity varies greatly in comparison to its evangelical counterparts. In some Catholic churches, embracing Candomblé indigenous culture signifies religious syncretism, as services incorporate a call and response worship style based on African tribal traditions, as well as reverence of Candomblé gods analogous to Catholics’ veneration of the saints. This form of Catholicism grew enough to produce a Catholic Archdiocese on the African Pastorate (CAAPA), which, in variance with standard Church doctrine, expresses the desire to “awaken the self-esteem” of the black community and celebrate African ethnicity in their community (61). Conversely, evangelical Christians fall into two categories: the progressive evangelicals, whose opinions toward the Afro-Brazilian identity movement

remain ambivalent, and the conservative majority who tend to argue that racism emerged only after the black movement made their parishioners aware of their phenotype.

For many Bahians, clinging to a religious identity is a way to indirectly become involved with politics, especially in a region where racial composition is becoming increasingly significant in the greater political and social spheres. As alternative identities challenge the traditional identity of the region, political mobilization becomes diffused and produces another barrier in the fight for racial equality in Brazil. Selka argues that the conservative (typically Pentecostal Christian) groups demonize the Candomblé to the extent that opposition to Afro-Brazilian culture becomes a defining element of evangelical identity in the region (100).

In the concluding chapter of *Religion and Ethnic Identity* Selka asks, “how does order and coherence emerge out of multiplicity and contestation” (150)? In Bahia’s religious field the Catholic, Candomblé and evangelical groups are highly competitive with one another, intensifying the struggle of self-identification facing many Bahians. The following excerpt demonstrates this complexity:

In evangelical discourse Candomblé *santos* are demons and Catholics are idolaters; in Catholic discourse Candomblé is a cult and evangelicals are fanatical heretics in Candomblé’s discourse Catholics are self-serving elites and evangelicals intolerant zealots. Furthermore, such struggles are equally salient within these religious groups as between them; Catholic conservatives oppose Afro-Catholic *irmandades* and the Pastoral Afro; progressive evangelicals oppose conservative Pentecostals; antisyncretists in the Candomblé oppose those who seek to preserve and deepen the connection between Candomblé and Catholicism. (130)

Through extensive ethnographic fieldwork, the author elucidates spheres of influence beyond organized religion that challenge traditionalism and heterodoxy. The relationships between each of these groups – the Candomblé, the Catholics, and the evangelicals – are at the crux of cultural transformation; if they cannot reach cultural and religious tolerance, one of these cultural subgroups may be consumed by the others, resulting in the deconstruction of Afro-Brazilian identity.

Faculty Profile

Karin Roseblatt

Prof. Karin Alejandra Roseblatt joined the Department of History this fall after thirteen years at Syracuse University. She will be teaching courses on twentieth-century Latin America, gender, nationalism and race, and will soon be appointed director of LASC.

Prof. Roseblatt was born in Chile and began her career as a scholar of that country. Her first book, *Gendered Compromises: Political Cultures and the State in Chile, 1920-1950* (University of North Carolina Press, 2000), looks at gender in working-class, leftist, and feminist organizations in Chile during the years of popular-front rule. Roseblatt argues that ideas about gender influenced the development of a populist welfare state in Chile.

Gendered Compromises was co-winner of the Berkshire Prize, awarded to the best first book written by a historian writing in any field of history.

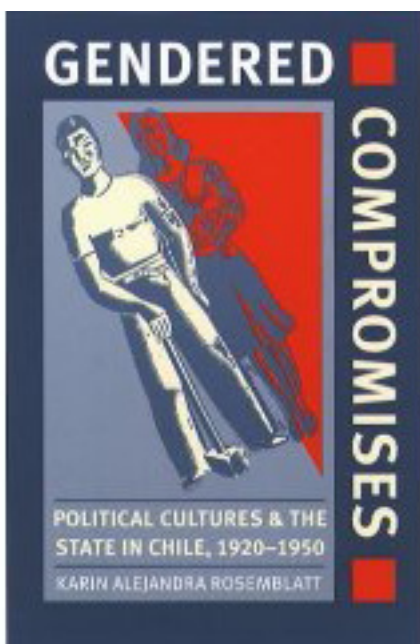
While working on this project, Roseblatt became intrigued by a set of ideas elites used to characterize people they saw as unfit for citizenship: Reformers described poor people as weak, diseased, poorly dressed, smelly, badly raised, and licentious. They portrayed poverty as visible, bodily, biological, and inherited. And they believed the diseased bodies and bad habits of the poor were the result of faulty inheritance and bad childrearing. In short, they talked about disreputable members of the working-class in



ways generally associated with race.

This led Roseblatt to her current book project, which looks at a set of ideas about the body, the psyche, and cultural differences that have grounded notions of both race and class. In her book manuscript, Roseblatt examines a series of scholarly undertakings that brought US and Mexican scholars into contact. By looking at these initiatives, Roseblatt is able to track how ideas used to talk about race in the United States were applied to class in Mexico. For instance, in one chapter of her book manuscript, Roseblatt looks at the ideas about the culture of poverty developed by US anthropologist Oscar Lewis. Lewis based his formulation on his extensive fieldwork in lower-class barrios of Mexico City; the term was later used in the United States by scholars trying to understand poverty in the Black ghettos of the Northeast.

Roseblatt's book project has also led her to look at the origins of Latin American Studies. In contrast to prevailing views of Latin American Studies as a government-sponsored Cold War enterprise, Roseblatt has found that Latin American Studies originated in the 1920s. US scholarly interest in Latin America came largely out of US scholars' interest in race in their own country. They saw Latin America as an interesting laboratory in which to observe the processes of acculturation that were also very much a part of US history.



Latin American Studies Center and Adele H. Stamp Student Gallery Week of Mexico @ Maryland

September 22 to 26, 2008

For an entire week in September, students, scholars, and artists of Mexico came together to celebrate the country's history, music, and culture.

Professor Andrew Selee of the Woodrow Wilson Center kicked off the week with a lecture on US-Mexico Relations, followed by a discussion of writer Katherine Porter by Beth Alvarez, archive-curator of the Katherine Porter exhibit and papers.



Later in the week, students from a variety of Latin American Studies classes attended Dr. James Maffie's discussion of "The Centrality of Nephantla in Conquest-era Nahua Philosophy."

In the evening, students gathered to watch Mexico's most awarded film, *El Violin*, which received 13 awards and 6 nominations after it was released in 2007.

On Thursday, members of the university community were able to enjoy a special performance by the Ballet of Maru Montero, a group specializing in traditional Mexican dances from several regions.

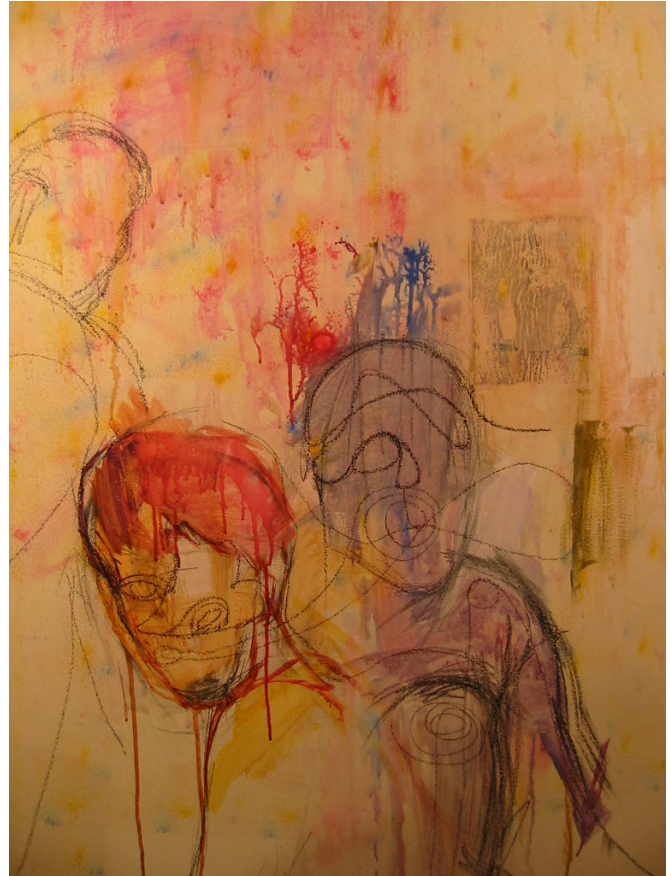


CONECTA

Artist Residency and Exhibition

At the end of the week, the Stamp Student Union Gallery held the opening ceremony for CONECTA, an exhibition and artist collaborative project featuring emerging U.S and Mexican Artists. The workspace was open to the public all week, allowing visitors to see the development of the artwork in real time, as well as celebrate the final product.

The purpose of CONECTA is to give emerging artists from Sinaloa, Mexico and Baltimore/Washington D.C. the unique opportunity to collaborate in the creation of original artworks for display, as well as forge lasting international professional associations. Most of the artists are under-35 years of age and without gallery representation. For most, this will be the first time working together in an artistic collaborative effort. They have been chosen as the inaugural group due to their commitment to their artistic careers and to the promise of their work. See CONECTA: Bringing Artists Together, page 14.



Participating artists included:
Cecilia Garcia,
Jose Carlos Flores Zazueta, Bernardo Alatorre Tapia, Sasha Blanton, Alyssa Dennis, and Juan Rojo

CONECTA: Bringing Artists Together

By Katherine Vences

Artists from the U.S. and Mexico came together last month for Mexico@ MD Week to create original pieces of art and establish relations between the two countries.

The exhibition, named CONECTA after all the linkages the project created along the way, was organized by Jackie Milad, who also served as curator. The project began more than a year and a half ago when Milad traveled to Sinaloa, Mexico for an exhibition. The trip left her impressed with the city's thriving art scene and remarkable amount of talent. During this trip and various others, Milad met the artists chosen to participate in the program.

"I feel there is a kinship between the major cities of Sinaloa and those of Maryland—they are both overshadowed by cities like Mexico City and New York City, respectively," said Milad.

Three artists from Mexico, Cecilia Garcia, Jose Carlos Flores Zazueta and Bernardo Alatorre Tapia along with two from Baltimore, Sasha Blanton and Alyssa Dennis, and Juan Rojo from Spain met in person on September 16 and began collaborating. They had previously communicated through a blog Milad started a year ago so that the artists could learn more about

each other's interests and art style.

"I think collaborating is a difficult process in art, especially in a short period of time. These artists truly impressed me, they worked long hours talking to each other about numerous topics, including language, gender politics, love, heartache, pit bulls, dreams, mythology, religion, world history, pop culture...the list is really endless," said Milad.

The six artists created the artwork in the Union Gallery at the Stamp Student Union, where it was also showcased. Passer-bys were able to view the artists work and observe their progress. The exhibition officially opened September 25 with a reception and remained open to the public until October 3.

"The inaugural project was a great success; the artists expressed great satisfaction for the program. My only expectation was that the artists challenge themselves to work collaboratively, to show the intellectual process to visitors and to learn from each other--and all this happened and more," added Milad.

As to the future, Milad plans to continue the project next year. A partnership with a cultural institute in Mexico is in the works, and Milad hopes to one day send U.S. artists there to participate in similar exhibitions.



Winter in Latin America

Approximately 1,400 UMCP students take part in one of the university's many study abroad programs each year. This year, the Study Abroad Office is giving students the opportunity to travel and learn in six different Latin American countries during the month-long Winter Term.

Of the 24 intensive faculty-led study abroad programs offered this year in December and January, ten will be taking place in Latin America. In Argentina, a small group of students will study the role of non-governmental institutions in Latin American development as they accompany sociology professor Roberto Patricio Korzeniewicz on visits to a variety of relevant actors in Buenos Aires and Humahuaca. A separate program in the same country will allow anthropology students to visit native villages, ethnographic museums, and cultural sites in Buenos Aires, Misiones, and Entro Ríos as they learn about Argentine development, health care and cultural representation from local anthropologists.

In Belize, entomology professor Lee Hellman will give students the chance to visit archeological sites, Mayan temples, coral reefs, and rainforests in order to gain insight into Mayan culture and the country's tropical environs.

Participants in the "Chilean Literature, Democracy and Social Change" program will explore Chile's traumatic past through the study of art and literature produced under Pinochet's 17-year dictatorship. In a three-week cultural immersion, students will meet renowned Chilean authors, visit historical sites, attend a variety of artistic performances, and even become mentors to a group of Chilean elementary school children.

In Costa Rica, students will be able to examine the relationship between the country's agroecosystems and the surrounding environment through meetings with naturalists, farmers, conservationists and Costa Rican professors. A group of students travelling to Ecuador will have the opportunity to study the culture and history of the country in intensive classes held at the Universidad de San Francisco de Quito and the Instituto Santiago de Quito, as well as through visits to historical sites and excursions outside of Santiago.

In a new Urban Studies course, graduate students will spend three weeks conducting hands-on research on the impact of tightened border control and fencing plans on the public officials, private businesses, and ordinary residents of Brownsville, Texas, and Matamoros, Mexico. A separate course in southern Mexico will allow participants to immerse themselves in Mexican culture as they study human services in the country and stay with local host families. Students in yet another new study abroad course will travel to Nicaragua to work with the country's first public lending library and study the challenges of providing library services in a developing nation. In the department of Plant Science's new "Medicinal Plants in the Peruvian Amazon" course, participating students will travel by boat down the Amazon in Peru as they learn about different plants' properties from local healers and other experts.

The Study Abroad Office continues to expand the semester, year, and short-term study abroad opportunities in Latin America every year. For more information, see their website at www.umd.edu/study-abroad.



The market in San Luis Potosi, Mexico

LASC provides a variety of courses on issues relevant to Latin America and the Caribbean in both English and Spanish, facilitates research on a diverse range of topics pertaining to the region, conducts outreach programs to U.S.-Latino communities, and holds several national and international conferences and symposia yearly.

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