

# Latin American artists in modernist Paris: a difficult consecration<sup>1</sup>

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**ABSTRACT:** This article seeks to problematize the recognition possibilities of Latin American artists in modernist Paris. Based on theories of artistic consecration, this article analyzes the process of musealization of works by Latin American artists, who became part of French public collections between the 1910s and the founding of the Musée National d'Art Moderne in 1947. The research, carried out in the Archives Nationales, made it possible to identify how many and which, among the more than three hundred Latin American artists who developed their work in Paris, were chosen to become part of these collections. As we will see, only a minuscule few actually managed to have their works included in a French public collection. Even when they did, this was hardly a guarantee of visibility, as revealed by certain blatant absences in the MNAM collection.

**KEYWORDS:** Latin American artists. Modernism. Paris. Musealization. Musée National d'Art Moderne.

**RESUMO:** Este artigo busca problematizar as possibilidades de reconhecimento obtidas por artistas latino-americanos na Paris modernista. A partir das teorias sobre consagração artística, analisa-se principalmente o processo de musealização das obras de artistas latino-americanos

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que passaram a compor os acervos públicos franceses entre a década de 1910 e a fundação do Musée National d'Art Moderne, em 1947. A pesquisa realizada nos Archives Nationales permitiu identificar quantos e quais, dentre os mais de trezentos artistas latino-americanos atuantes em Paris, foram escolhidos para comporem tais coleções. Como se verá, foram realmente poucos aqueles que conseguiram ter suas obras inseridas numa coleção pública francesa, e mesmo assim, isso não garantiu visibilidade na época, como as flagrantes ausências no MNAM bem revelam.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Artistas latino-americanos. Modernismo. Paris. Musealização. Musée National d'Art Moderne.

If one visits the Centre Pompidou nowadays, in the current headquarters of France's Musée National d'Art Moderne, they can admire one of Frida Kahlo's best-known self-portraits, often a privileged piece in the exhibition's itinerary.<sup>3</sup> Incidentally, the visibility of artists from Latin America was purposely emphasized in the exhibition "Modernités Plurielles," carried out by the aforementioned institution from 2013 to 2015, under the curatorship of Catherine Grenier. In this controversial exhibition, international narratives about modern art elevated Brazilian modernism to an unusual centrality, with the latter even assuming a leading role in one of the exhibition's central nuclei, entitled "Os Realismos" [Realisms].<sup>4</sup> However, this centrality, or recognition, has not always been present in the institution, as I intend to discuss over the following pages.

From the middle of the 19th century, Paris has been a well-established artistic metropolis, attracting thousands of foreign artists.<sup>5</sup> For Latin American artists oriented towards academic art, since at least 1860 the so-called "City of Light" overshadowed Rome in its importance as a preferential center for consolidating these artists' respective backgrounds and for their attempts at building some kind of international recognition. By the first decades of the 20th century this was still true, even though academicism had lost its centrality and the city had also begun to attract artists with a modernist orientation. This situation continued throughout the 20th century: although the Second World War led to the emergence of New York as a powerful artistic center, Paris remained an important destination for Latin American artists.<sup>6</sup>

Several studies have previously discussed this topic. In *Artistas modernistas em Paris, década de 1920* [Modernist Artists in Paris in the 1920s], Marta Rossetti Batista thoroughly analyzed the sojourns of several Brazilian artists in the French capital during that decade.<sup>7</sup> Despite her study's invaluable contribution as well as pioneering spirit and mobilization of fundamental data, the author excluded from her analytical field of view the artists who were not in tune with artistic schools she perceived as avant-garde. Marcia Camargos filled part of this gap by dedicating herself to the study of the *Pensionato Artístico do Estado de São Paulo* [Artistic Patronage Body of the State of São Paulo], an organ created in 1914. Its role was to promote the artistic improvement of painters, sculptors and musicians from São Paulo – many of them with a more conservative orientation – by sending them abroad. Between 1914 and 1930, fourteen scholarships were awarded to fine artists so they could improve themselves in Paris.<sup>8</sup> In a previous research, which also addressed artists from federative states other than São Paulo, I arrived at a number of 25 Brazilian artists who had been in Paris during the 1920s alone.<sup>9</sup> These works put particular emphasis on recovering the trajectories of these artists in the French capital, focusing on their formative places, the exhibition spaces through which they circulated, and how they were perceived by their critics and by historiography.

3. See <<https://bit.ly/3r3YH3w>>.

4. In this regard, see <<https://bit.ly/3r5xcqd>>. The exhibition was not consensually well received. For some, even though it attempted to create a non-Eurocentric narrative, its aesthetic principles, divisions and criteria did more to reaffirm the European canon than to deconstruct it. In this sense, see: Mora; Parkmann (2015); Maroja (2013).

5. As soon as 1860, there were already 4,000 artists working in the city, according to Lethève (1968, p. 178). See also: Gonnard; Lebovici (2007).

6. Guilbault (1983). However, it is worth noting that, for Latin American artists, Paris maintained its relative centrality during the entire second half of the 20th century. Cf. Couto (2016). On this topic, also see Plante (2013).

7. Batista (2012).

8. In any case, Márcia Camargos' research focuses on artists subsidized by the *Pensionato Artístico*, whose origin was therefore in São Paulo. This means that the travels of artists from Rio de Janeiro, sponsored by the ENBA or funded by their states, were not taken into consideration.

9. Simioni (2016).

10. Letter from Tarsila to Anita Malfatti, October 20, 1920. Cited by Amaral (2003, p. 48, our translation).

The three aforementioned works deal with the subject of Brazilian artists in Paris specifically during the 1910s and 1920s. Michele Greet's research, *Transatlantic encounters: Latin American artists in Paris between the wars*, which resulted in a book and a website, considerably broadens the focus to more than three hundred artists from different Latin American countries, whose sojourns in Paris took place between 1910 and 1940. The author investigates the artistic training conditions to which they had access; their participation in salons and galleries; how they were perceived by critics; and the level of recognition they were able to achieve. This article, on the other hand, seeks to establish a dialogue with these research projects by approaching an ensemble of data that has merited sparse investigation or emphasis by the aforementioned authors: the presence of Latin American works in French museum collections during the period in question.

Latin American artists did not comprise a cohesive group or school. In this sense, they differ from other colonies of foreign artists, such as the Russians, known for their production alongside Diaghilev's ballets, for their constructivist works and their grouping around private academies, such as the Académie de La Palette; or the Italians, who organized at least two gallery exhibitions to promote their own visibility, such as *Peintres italiens de Paris* at the Salon de l'Escalier (in 1928), and *Un group d'italiens de Paris* at the Galerie Zak (in 1929). At a time when belonging to a group was a significant criterion for notability in the artistic environment – as evidenced by the manifestos whose proliferation could be attributed to how important it was for one to express one's particular aesthetic allegiance – the fact that Latin American artists did not recognize themselves as a group may have been an obstacle in the way of their recognition. In a highly competitive universe, in which, as Tarsila understandably recounts, "many were called but few were elected,"<sup>10</sup> consolidating one's name and career was not an insignificant challenge.

The difficulty in identifying a Latin American school reflects a broader issue: namely, what is meant by "Latin America." The very notion of a Latin America is quite complex. It is sometimes defined as a geographical unit that brings together several countries below the United States (Mexico, Central America, South America and some Caribbean countries), or even as a historical unit, since these countries' native populations went through colonization processes carried out by their respective metropolises, leading to certain linguistic affinities – generally speaking, the colonists successfully imposed Spanish and Portuguese as national languages, even though there were occasional exceptions such as the imposition of French and English in some countries and even Dutch in the case of Suriname. The term is also often used in a "distinctive" sense, meant to separate these countries from their North American counterparts, such as the United States and Canada. This presumed contrast is derived from differences in their respective

colonial processes, which in the case of the latter led to other languages (English and French) and religious variants becoming dominant: even if they were both rooted in Christianity, North American countries were not Catholic per se, as in the case of the Spanish and Portuguese empires. However, this distinctive character does not only purport to express differences, but also inequalities, for the notions of North America and Latin America are associated with very different representations of each area's respective levels of "civilization," modernization, and development.

In this sense, it is worth noting that the term Latin America was also coined and "desired" by Latin American artists themselves in their search for identity, emancipation and appreciation, as became clear at different moments throughout the 19th and 20th centuries.<sup>11</sup> One should not forget, however, that in the period studied here, the notion of Latin America was not fully formed, but still in gestation. The artistic system had a deep participation in this process, selecting the artists, the works and the ensemble of narratives responsible for identifying so-called "Latin American art."<sup>12</sup> This article analyzes the possibilities of achieving artistic success in modernist Paris, based on two elements: firstly, *nationality*, considering that the article's scope lies within the universe of Latin American countries and, secondly, *gender*, putting forward the question of whether the artists' gender played any kind of impact on their chances of recognition.

But before delving into the article's subject matter, it is necessary to explain what is meant by "artistic success." Certain authors, especially from the sociology of art, have debated how artistic success is neither arbitrary nor exclusively derived from artists' individual talents. To this end, these authors have attempted to demonstrate that there are relatively constant, stable and somewhat objective indexes of success. It would be possible to measure an artist's degree of *recognition* by means of concrete elements such as their presence in collections (public or private), as well as large shows and exhibitions (which could be hierarchized according to the place where they occurred and/or their individual or collective character), by their presence in the media (newspapers, magazines, TV, cinema, internet, etc.), and, finally, by means of reviews or comments in the specialized literature.<sup>13</sup> Such elements can be coded and ranked, as shown by the *Kunstkompass* and *Artprice* listings, which purport to provide information referring to artists' success in terms of their visibility and the price their works achieve in the secondary market, as discussed by Alain Quemin.<sup>14</sup> The term consecration, on the other hand, points to the degree of accumulated recognition that determines legitimizing bodies' acceptance of artists and their works.<sup>15</sup> In that sense, consecration would be the endpoint and culmination of the entire artistic-recognition process.

As such, the "circles of recognition" model developed by Alan Bowness (1989), which was taken up and revised by Nathalie Heinich (1998) and

11. In this regard, see: Soares (2015).

12. Relevant to this discussion, there are two other events that I will not be able to delve into at this moment: in France, the *Exposition d'Art Américain-Latin*, which took place in 1924 at the *Maison de l'Amérique Latine* and brought together 260 works by 42 artists with diverse orientations and national origins. The works came from private collections. The exhibition did not have much impact, but it was a pioneering initiative. In this regard, see: Squeff (2015). More important, undoubtedly, was the MoMa's investment in this direction. To this end, cf: COTA JR, Eustáquio Ornelas. *A formação da coleção latino-americana do MoMA*. São Paulo: Paco Editorial. 2019. The author demonstrates how the "Latin American art" category was engendered within the MoMa, especially between 1939 and 1943. Initially, in 1931, this category was restricted to Mexican painters, failing to encompass a broader group of artists or countries. Little by little, however, it gained breadth due to the geopolitical interests at stake during the period – i.e. the Good Neighbor Policy – and the role that the arts, particularly through the MoMA, played in this process.

13. Bowness (1989); Heinich (1998); Rojzman (2005).

14. Quemin (2013).

15. Rojzman (2005, p. 19).

16. In the contemporary art system, it is possible to establish relationships between large public museums and some private institutions, foundations or even cultural centers, which also maintain open spaces for visits, wide attendance and a high degree of visibility and legitimacy. In Brazil, Itaú Cultural, Instituto Tomie Ohtake and Inhotim are good examples. These institutions are able to play a role similar to that of museums.

17. In the original: “A principios del siglo XX, el reconocimiento del arte de vanguardia empezó en el ámbito privado del mercado. Los museos fueron muy lentos y reacios en aceptar las nuevas formas artísticas. Pero a partir de las décadas de 1950 y, especialmente, de 1960, el arte de vanguardia más transgresor tuvo en el Estado y las instituciones su principal valedor y su más rápido sello de reconocimiento. La historia del importante lugar que ocupan *Les demoiselles d’Avignon* de Picasso en el desarrollo del arte moderno no empieza en 1907, sino en 1939, cuando el Museo de Arte Moderno de Nueva York presentó la obra en una de sus salas.” Furió (2012, p. 41, emphasis added, our translation).

subsequently by Nuria Peist Rojzman (2005), constitutes a useful methodological point of reference. Per this model, between the production of the work – regarded as time zero – and its consecration there is a process involving the building of visibility, legitimacy and recognition, dimensions that involve different actors and instances. The initial support circle is constituted by the people closest to the artists, i.e., their immediate peers. This group may comprise other artists, friends who work as art critics, and the works’ first collectors. Such a nucleus, as Nuria Peist defines it, is fundamental because it provides the producer with symbolical and economic support. Its power to legitimize said producer, however, is limited. Over time, artists’ recognition is broadened as their works become better known, more frequently analyzed, more often acquired, and further exposed to the world at large by social groups who stand spatiotemporally more distant (in a sociological rather than geographical sense) from the artist. Thus, consecration implies a process of accumulation of recognition. The endpoint of this process depends on the integration of artists and their works with the major museums: the aforementioned authors regard these institutions as those with the greatest capacity to legitimize works and artists in the view of the general public, besides providing them with increased visibility.<sup>16</sup>

In the same direction, Vicenç Furió’s comment on Picasso’s famous work *Les demoiselles d’Avignon* – now regarded as Cubism’s foundational work – is quite interesting:

At the beginning of the 20th century, avant-garde art was embraced by the market. Museums, however, were reluctant to accept these new art forms. But from the 1950s and especially from the 1960s onwards, even the most transgressive avant-garde art had in the State and in art institutions their greatest supporters and their most expedient certificate of recognition. The history behind the important place of Picasso’s *Les demoiselles d’Avignon* in the development of modern art starts not in 1907, but rather in 1939, when New York’s Museum of Modern Art exhibited the work in one of its rooms.<sup>17</sup>

Based on the theoretical premises of artistic consecration discussed above and, within this process, considering the central role of the great art museums, this study elected to investigate the presence of works by Latin American artists in French public collections between the 1920s and the mid-1940s. It also addresses the integration of works by these artists in respect to the most important milestone for the institutionalization of modern art in France, namely the formation of the Musée National d’Art Moderne collection. Created in 1942, during the German Occupation, the Museum was officially inaugurated in 1947.

## THE PLACE OF FOREIGNERS IN THE SCHOOL OF PARIS

18. In this regard, see Bertrand Dorléac (1986).

19. Joyeux-Prunel (2007).

In modernist Paris, the artists' provenance was an important condition and, at times, a source of inequality. Even though a few foreign artists such as Pablo Picasso were able to obtain immense renown in Paris before the Second World War – and in doing so helped to spread a certain mythology of the city as a “land of opportunities” – reality for most artists was in quite different. One's condition as a foreigner was a concrete social marker as well as a dynamic condition whose weight as a determinant factor of artistic success changed during the long period known as modernism. Being a foreigner in the cosmopolitan Paris of the “Belle époque” was not in itself an obstacle, in contrast to what took place in the post-World War I era, marked by the intensification of nationalisms and permeated by an economic crisis that had evident cultural implications. However – on top of variables such as one's country, region and religion –, being a foreigner in France during the end of the 1930s, that is, after the Nazi invasion, was somewhat complicated and even dangerous. Xenophobia became a state policy, with implications even for the artistic environment, as attested by Laurence Bertrand Dorléac's studies on the Vichy government.<sup>18</sup>

Hostility towards “outsiders” had already manifested itself even before the First World War (1914-1918), more precisely in 1912, when Parisian city councilor Ladoué addressed a letter to the undersecretary of Fine Arts, Léon Bérard, accusing the Salon d'Automne of subjecting itself to an invasion by art of questionable quality, the offspring of Cubism. According to the councilor, this had stemmed from the presence of foreigners in French art circles. This manifestation provoked several likeminded reactions in the press, including one by critic Louis Vauxcelles (1870-1943), who associated the allegedly poor quality of modern art with outsider influences. Others blamed the salon's jury – which had supposedly been taken over by foreigners – for the decadence of the works that were exhibited and awarded there.<sup>19</sup>

At the end of the First World War, the discomfort with outsiders not only failed to dissipate but perhaps even increased. At that juncture, a specific episode is suggestive of the insidious presence of this animosity. In 1921, it was decided that the Musée du Luxembourg – the institutional home of contemporary art in France, then referred to as “art vivant” – was to be divided in two. On one side, a museum dedicated to “Foreign Schools” would emerge through the Musée du Jeu de Paume, and, on the other, the Musée du Luxembourg would go on as a space for the exclusive exhibition of works by French-born artists, with a view to enhancing the visibility of the French contribution to the development of modern

20. Joyeux-Prunel (2017, p. 49).

21. Les Cahiers du Musée Nationale d'Art Moderne (2018, p. 40).

22. Joyeux-Prunel (2017, p. 49, our translation).

23. Warnod (1925 apud MUSÉE D'ART MODERNE DE LA VILLE DE PARIS, p. 88, our translation). In the original: "L'École de Paris existe. Plus tard, les historiens de l'art pourront, mieux que nous, en définir le caractère et étudier les éléments qui la composent, mais nous pouvons toujours affirmer son existence et sa force attractive qui fait venir chez nous les artistes du monde entier [...]. Peut-on considérer comme indésirable l'artiste pour qui Paris est la Terre promise, la terre bénie des peintres et sculpteurs[...]?"

24. In the original: "There are among them great artists, creators who give back more than they take. They pay for the others, the followers, the makers of pastiche, the second-hand merchants, so others can remain in place and content themselves with coming to France to study the fine arts, returning home right away to exploit the goods they just have acquired and loyally spread throughout the world the sovereignty of French art". Greet (2018, p. 152-153, our translation).

25. In this regard, see: Kangaslahti (2009, p. 85-111).

26. Bertrand Dorléac (1996).

art.<sup>20</sup> In 1930, the Musée du Jeu de Paume would obtain administrative autonomy, being separated from its parent institution.<sup>21</sup> Similar episodes took place in the 1920s; in 1923, the Salon des Indépendants committee decided to divide the salon's exhibitions according to each artist's nationality. In the following year, they decided to "separate the French from foreigners, with the latter being grouped according to nationality or race."<sup>22</sup> As a result, several important foreign artists – Foujita, Van Dongen, Zadkine, Alice Halicka, among others – left the Salon des Indépendants, whose prestige was severely shaken.

The term "École de Paris," coined by the critic André Warnod in 1925, was one of the main offspring of this complex moment. In two articles published in the same year, the critic proposed the existence of a "School of Paris" in art, defined as a grouping of contemporary trends marked by their anti-academic character, and sometimes synonymous to independent art. This group received contributions from artists of different national origins, but they all developed their work in France.

The School of Paris exists. Later, art historians will be able to better define its character and study its component elements, but we can certainly affirm its existence and its strength of attraction, which leads artists from all over the world to come to us ... Are we to consider the artist for whom Paris is the promised land, the blessed land of painters and sculptors, as an undesirable...?<sup>23</sup>

Further on, he describes this broad artistic community's differentiated contribution:

Among them are great artists, creators who give more than they take. There are among them great artists, creators who give back more than they take. They pay for the others, the followers, the makers of pastiche, the second-hand merchants, so others can remain in place and content themselves with coming to France to study the fine arts, returning home right away to exploit the goods they just have acquired and loyally spread throughout the world the sovereignty of French art.<sup>24</sup>

The term École de Paris coined by Warnod thus presented a solution for integrating foreign artists into a cultural whole whose headquarters was the French capital. This meant that they were included in such eclectic "school", however, their creative powers were subject to a higher instance: the metropolis that welcomed them and opened a path for their talents to bear fruit.<sup>25</sup> Warnod's commentary had significant repercussions: so much so that the expression became a category used to encompass all artistic production in modernist Paris, a production characterized by its eclecticism and diversity.<sup>26</sup>



Considering the fact that this environment simultaneously welcomed and subjected foreigners to a hierarchy determined by a specific understanding of the French painting,<sup>27</sup> what possibilities of recognition were available? To consecrate oneself in France meant to follow intertwining paths: one had to participate in salons, hold gallery exhibitions and, finally, have one's works acquired by official institutions, such as the Musée du Luxembourg or its "foreign" version, the younger Musée du Jeu de Paume.

The annual salons then in operation were five: the Société des Artistes Français, founded in 1881; the Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts, opened in 1890; the Salon des Indépendants, which appeared in 1884; the Salon d'Automne, open since 1903; and, finally, the Salon des Tuileries, created in 1923. With the exception of the first, all accepted works by foreigners in their exhibitions. However, these salons had diverse profiles and levels of prestige. The Salon de la Nationale, promoted by the Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts, was distinctly conservative, in keeping with the École des Beaux-Arts' tradition; meanwhile, the Salon d'Automne and the Salon des Indépendants were known for their openness towards avant-garde artists. Among the latter, the Salon d'Automne was more prestigious due to its jury (an organ that the Salon des Indépendants purposely refuted), which also made it more selective. Moreover, it was well-known for having held notorious exhibitions, such as the 1905 exhibition that became known as Fauvism's debut. The Salon des Tuileries emerged only in 1923, in an attempt to bring modernists together under a shared space. It was devised as a place of reconciliation, at a time when the crisis of Parisian salons was well underway.<sup>28</sup>

The salons offered a unique opportunity for Latin American artists to participate in the French artistic circuit. According to Michele Greet, approximately sixty Latin American artists sent works to the salons during the studied period, some of them appearing regularly in exhibitions.<sup>29</sup> Although few managed to win awards and distinctions in these spaces, for many it was an opportunity to have their works displayed and commented on by critics. Indeed, press repercussions were fundamental for the artistic career, increasing one's chances of being accepted by galleries and salons. Success in the salons also led to important repercussions in the artists' countries of origin, which lend them prestige to be enjoyed upon their return.

Beyond these institutions, participation in the artistic market was important for one to be taken note of. Exhibiting one's work in a gallery was an increasingly crucial element for gaining visibility in modernist Paris.<sup>30</sup> Some critics provided constant coverage of salon exhibitions by means of articles in periodicals, such as Waldemar George in *L'Amour de L'art* or Maurice Raynal in *L'Intransigent*, and

27. On the different nuances and debates regarding what was meant by the term "French painting," read: GREET (op. cit., p. 64-65). The author explains that the idea of a "French School" of modern painting was defended by several critics during the period. Their respective stances, however, were subject to variations, ranging from a clearly organicist and xenophobic view of the homeland, such as that of critic Camille Mauclair, to a version that opened itself to foreigner participation – along with their particularities of origin, culture, religion and style – insofar as their production took place under the auspices of Paris and their contributions were integrated into the "French spirit," a position defended by André Warnod. The intermediate position, which seems to have had more followers, was the one adopted by artists such as Lhote and Bissière and by the critic Vauxcelles. It entailed the understanding that French national reality owed more to an ideal of a territorial community unified by the will of the people than to an organicist view of national affiliation or ethnic belonging. From an aesthetic point of view, this would translate into a propensity for a type of realism tributary to the Cézannian school, elevated into a paradigm of the modernist French tradition.

28. Maingon (2014).

29. Greet (2017).

30. Joyeux-Prunel (2017, p. 49).

31. Greet (2017, p. 129).

32. On the Parisian galleries, see: Saint-Raymond; Maupeou; Cavero (2016).

33. Cf. Greet (2017).

especially Raymond Cogniat, with his coverage of Latin American exhibitions in the *Revue de l'Amérique Latine*.<sup>31</sup> These critics were decisive intermediaries for the notability of some Latin American artists.

By the 1920s, as Michele Greet, Claire Maignon and Béatrice Joyeux-Prunel demonstrate, the salons had lost their monopoly of artistic consecration. The gallery system, on the other hand, had grown dramatically, with 130 operational establishments. Approximately 30 Latin American artists held solo exhibitions in prestigious Parisian galleries.<sup>32</sup> This corresponds to only a tenth of the approximately 330 artists who spent time in the city during the period. This highlights the Parisian artistic system's selectivity, as well as the difficulty faced by this population of foreigners when it came to fulfilling this decisive step towards achieving visibility and artistic recognition.

On the very popular rue La Boétie, Max Jimenez, Tarsila do Amaral and Joaquín Torres Garcia exhibited their works at Galerie Percier. At the prestigious L'Effort Moderne gallery, Vicente do Rego Monteiro, Emilio Pettoruti and Tarsila do Amaral had exhibitions between the 1920s and the early 1930s.<sup>33</sup> In Rive Droite, the Uruguayan Carlos Castellanos held a solo exhibition at Galerie Durand-Ruel in 1927, while his compatriot, the painter Pedro Figari, held exhibitions at the Galerie Druet in 1923, 1925 and 1927. One of Figari's paintings from the 1927 exhibition, entitled *Danse créole* (Figures 1 and 2), was acquired by the government and sent to the Musée Jeu de Paume, at the time a place for contemporary foreign art collections. This was the only work by the artist bought during the interwar period – nowadays, it belongs to the Musée d'Orsay. Figari exemplifies a complete process of consecration. Yet how many Latin Americans were able to achieve the same feat?

le 2<sup>e</sup> Juin 1927

**NOTE**

pour le Bureau des Travaux d'Art, Musées et Expositions

On a l'honneur d'informer le Bureau des Travaux d'Art que  
conformément aux notes du 29 Avril 1927 et 1<sup>er</sup> Juin Courant  
l'œuvre de M. Figari  
intitulée "La danse créole"

(Peinture)

a été inscrite au livre d'inventaire du Dépôt du Commissariat des  
Expositions sous le N° 10043 avec mention de son  
affectation au Musée du Jeu-de-Paume.

ARCHIVES  
NATIONALES

Le Commissaire des Expositions  
chargé de la conservation des œuvres

M. Rousselot

RM

Figure 1 – Purchase receipt for the work *La Danse Créole*. Figari's folder. Archives Nationales. Folder F/21/4208. Photograph by the author.

Paris, le 17 Mai 1927

A. S. E. le Ministre de l'Instruction  
Publique et des Beaux Arts.

J'ai l'honneur de ~~vous~~ remettre à V. S.  
la déclaration ci-jointe, relative au tableau  
"La danse créole", acquis par le Musée du  
Jeu de Paume.

Je prie S. E. d'agréer l'expression de  
ma considération très distinguée

Pedro Figari

13. Place du Panthéon (V<sup>e</sup>)



Figure 2 – Handwritten text signed by Pedro Figari declaring the sending of the acquired canvas to the Musée du Jeu de Paume. Archives Nationales. Folder F/21/4208. Archives Nationales. Photograph by the author.



## THE PRESENCE OF LATIN AMERICAN ARTISTS IN FRENCH GOVERNMENT COLLECTIONS

On the basis of surveys carried out using different databases and sources, one is able to ascertain that there were 333 Latin American artists working in the modernist Paris.<sup>34</sup> Among these, only 23 men and 5 women managed to have at least one of their works included in a French government collection. This means that 305 artists were *not* able to achieve such a degree of consecration, i.e., the vast majority (91.5%). In this particular context, success is even lower than in the context of private galleries – where 9.0% of artists were able to hold exhibitions – reaching a modest 8.5% musealization rate.

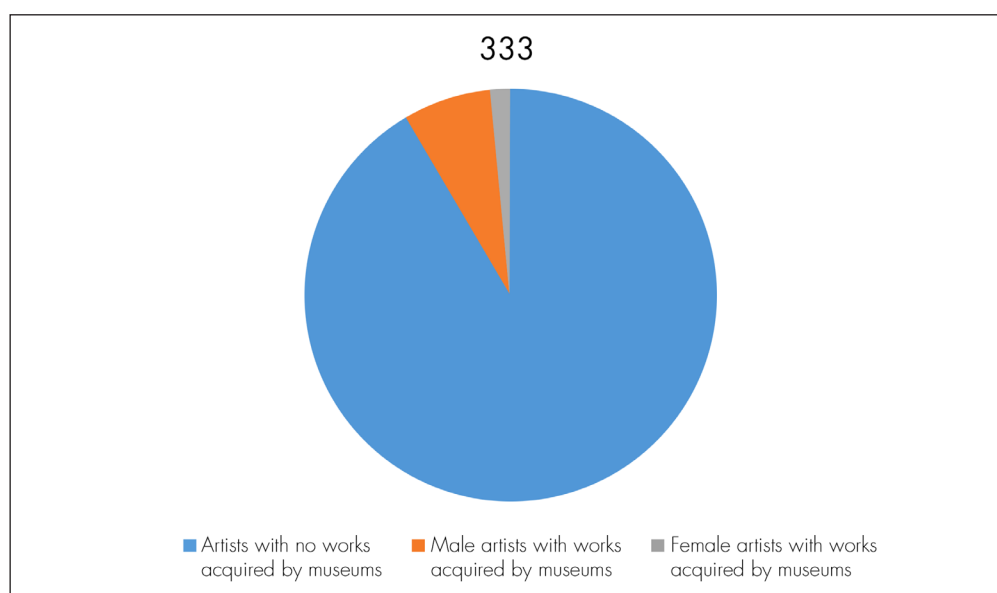


Figure 3 – Graph representing French museums' acquisition of works by Latin American artists.

It is worth noting that the survey indicates that the quantity of musealized works in the case of female artists is slightly lower than in the case of male artists. In absolute terms, only works by five artists were kept by the institutions (authored by Brazilians Anita Malfatti and Tarsila do Amaral, Peruvian Carmen Sacco, Mexican Frida Kahlo, and Venezuelan Emile Boggio). The interpretation of these data, however, requires a nuanced perspective: after all, the number of Latin American women artists in Paris in the period was also considerably less than that of men. Among the 333 artists working in the city, 263 were male. Among them, 23 had musealized works (8.7%), while 240 (91.3%) did not. In the same period, approximately seventy women artists were in Paris. Only five of them had musealized works (7.1%), while 65 (92.9%) did not.

34. I employed the following data source: in France, Arcade, CNAP, Réunion des Musées Nationaux, and Joconde. I also carried out in-person consultations of the artists' folders and of acquisition information made available by the Archives Nationales. The *Transatlantic Encounters* website, published by Michele Greet, was used as a comparative grid. For the precise number of 333, doubtful or error-prone cases were excluded. Not without doubts, I opted to exclude artists who developed significant careers in Brazil and whose works were acquired in France, such as Lasar Segall and Samson Flexor. This exclusion had to be carried out even though I consider them fundamental for the development of "art in Brazil." It was necessary in order to maintain this study's intended scope. I would not be able to equate their cases to those of other foreign artists who had equivalent roles in other countries, such as Mexico, Argentina, Peru, Chile etc. For this reason, I ended up opting for a somewhat restrictive criterium, based on origin or nationality, the parameters which the involved data sources provided for in a more objective and stable manner. In this sense, the figure of 333 is as reliable as possible at the moment but remains subject to relative changes as research progresses.

35. Letter from Anita Malfatti to Mário de Andrade. Paris, circa mid-November 1926. Archive of the Institute of Brazilian Studies at the University of São Paulo.

Such quantitative data could be contrasted with art history's usual narratives, based on individual cases of artists who somehow had "successful" sojourns in Paris. How many texts of the period or even academic works celebrated Tarsila's "success" in Paris, crowned by her exhibition at Galerie Percier, regardless of whether her works were actually sold? Or Anita Malfatti, who, in an exchange of letters with Mário de Andrade – her personal friend and by then a famous art critic in São Paulo – happily commented on the purchase of one of her paintings by the French Government. She recounts:

Exciting news over here. I sent that canvas I told you about to Salon du Franc. They had that famous auction, with 147 canvases, worth almost 800,000 francs. *My canvas was bought by the "Etat", so it will go to some museum in France. How about it, huh? That was what I wanted.*

At first I thought it had been a private buyer, but then I got the good news. Having a canvas purchased by the French government always bodes well. You may give me a big hug. I believe I deserve that. Did I tell you that because of this canvas Fujita asked for a presentation? "Ça commence à gazer," as Parisians say ...<sup>35</sup>

However, as we will see, the canvas Malfatti is referring to has never been part of an exhibition, and its whereabouts are unknown to this day. These episodic successes tended to be highly valued by the artists themselves and had positive reverberations in their countries of origin. But a broader perspective makes us acutely aware that, generally speaking, most Latin American artists failed to stand out in Paris' art scene. When the criterion of artwork musealization is chosen as the endpoint of the consecration process, this becomes quite evident. As we have shown, musealization rates among artists were lower than 10%, including both men and women.

We should also point out that, in the interwar period, the works were acquired by means of either purchase or donation, carried out by the artists themselves or posthumously by collectors or family members. These modalities are subject to different prestige hierarchies. Acquisition by means of purchase appears as the most respectable modality, since it comprises a choice made by a group of specialists whose authority has been legitimized by the State and its cultural institutions. Despite the shortcomings of archive documents regarding these acquisition processes, for the contingent of Latin American artists studied here, the following table provides a panorama:

Artist's name	Origin	Works acquired/Year of acquisition	Transaction modality	Provenance	Recipient
<b>Acuña, Luis</b> Alberto	Colombia	<i>Nessus séduisant Déjanire/</i> 1926	Purchase	Salon du Franc	Unknown location
<b>Barreda, Enrique</b>	Peru	<i>Saint-Jean-de-Luz, le port/</i> 1928	Purchase	Galerie Charpentier	Musée du Jeu de Paume. Transferred to Musée des Beaux-Arts Meurthe-et-Moselle
<b>Beltran-Masses, F.</b> <sup>36</sup>	Cuba/Spain	<i>La Duchesse Sforza;</i>  <i>Pierrot Malade</i> (acquired in 1933);  <i>L'Offrande</i>  <i>Portrait du navigateur Alain Gerbault</i>  (all lacking information on date of acquisition)	No information	No information	Réunion des Musées Nationaux
<b>Brecheret, Victor</b>	Brazil	<i>Bélier;</i> <i>Amazonas or Le Groupe/</i> 1934	Artist donation	Artist donation	Musée Jeu de Paume. In deposit to Mairie de La Roche-sur-Yon after 1954
<b>Carreño, Mario</b>	Cuba/ Chile	No information/ 1939	Purchase	Galerie Bernheim-Jeune	Not present in the Arcade base. Lacks information on the work's title and whereabouts

36. In the Arcade base, there is not a single mention of works by this artist in public collections, but on the Musée Pompidou/Réunion des Musées Nationaux website some information is available.

Artist's name	Origin	Works acquired/Year of acquisition	Transaction modality	Provenance	Recipient
Castellanos, Carlos	Uruguay	<i>La porteuse d'eau</i> /1919 <i>Les chasseurs (sud amérique tropical)</i> /1919 <i>Marchands d'oiseaux</i> /1919	Purchase	Salon d'Automne	Musée du Luxembourg
		<i>Espagnols surpris par des Indiens</i> /1926	No information	Salon du Franc	Whereabouts unknown. Empty dossier
Coria, Benjamin	Mexico	<i>Nature morte</i> /1926	No information	Salon du Franc	No information. Attributed to Mairie de Vitry-sur-Loire in 1937
Cardenas Castro, Juan Manuel	Peru	<i>Imprecision [sic!]</i> /1926	No information	Salon du Franc	No information. Empty dossier
Di Cavalcanti, Emiliano	Brazil	<i>Scène brésilienne</i> /1939	Purchase	Billiers-Worms Gallery	Jeu de Paume Museum
Figari, Pedro	Uruguay	<i>La danse créole</i> /1927	Purchase	No information	Musée du Jeu de Paume
Fonseca, Gaston de	Brazil	<i>La fontaine de Castalie à Delphes</i> /1923	Purchase	No information	No information
		Canvas with no information/1933	Purchase	No information	No information
		<i>Femme à la guitare</i> /1936	Purchase	No information	-
Lagos, Alberto	Argentina	<i>Douleureuse</i> /1924	Purchase	No information	Musée du Luxembourg



Artist's name	Origin	Works acquired/Year of acquisition	Transaction modality	Provenance	Recipient
Zarate Orhtis, Miguel	Chile	<i>Still life</i> /1926	Purchase	No information	No information
		<i>Fleurs</i> /1929	Purchase	No information	Musée du Luxembourg
		<i>Dom Quixote de la mancha</i> /1937	Purchase	No information	Marie de Tarn
Rego Monteiro, Vicente do <sup>37</sup>	Brazil	<i>Les Boxeurs</i> /1928	Purchase	Berhaim-Jeune Gallery	Musée de Grenoble
		<i>L'Enfant</i> /1937	Purchase	–	Musée du Jeu de Paume
Rendon, Manuel	Ecuador	<i>Femmes Nues</i> /1926	No information	Salon du Franc	Musée de Grenoble. Empty dossier
Rozo, Rómulo	Colombia	<i>Fauno</i> /1928	Purchase	Cercle de l'Amérique Latine Exhibition	No information
		No information/1926	No information	Salon du Franc	Empty dossier
Sangroniz, Luis Alberto de	Chile	No information/1924	Purchase	No information	No information
Sicre, Juan José	Cuba	<i>Femme agenouillée</i> /1926	No accurate information	Salon du Franc	Transferred to Nouvelle-Calédonie in 1930
Terry, José Antonio	Argentina	<i>La naine chepa avec sa cruche</i> /1924	Purchase	Galerie Charpentier	Musée du Luxembourg
		<i>Colonne en marbre surmontée d'une urne en marbre et granit</i> /1937	Purchase	Work ordered by and donated to the City of Evian	Mairie d'Evian-les-Bains
Toledo Piza, Domingos V.	Brazil	<i>Paysage de neige</i> /1934	Purchase	No information	Musée du Jeu de Paume
Quinquela Martín, Benito	Argentina	<i>Effet d'orage</i> /1926	Purchase	Galerie Charpentier	Musée du Jeu de Paume

37. In addition to the aforementioned canvases, some Vicente do Rego Monteiro canvases were later acquired by the French government, although the respective dates of purchase exceed this study's timeframe. They are the following: *L'Adoration des Bergers*, in 1953, *La chasse*, in 1959, and *Le Buveur*, in 1964.

38. Emilie Boggio (1857-1920), a Venezuelan artist, had three works acquired by the French State prior to this study's elected timeframe. She cannot be considered a modernist artist. See <<https://bit.ly/3eJ1aO1>>.

39. In her memoirs, Anita Malfatti stated that the work was purchased by the State. However, the marker "Unknown transaction" appears in her Archives Nationales dossier. Moreover, as others from Salon du Franc, the dossier is empty.

Artist's name	Origin	Works acquired/Year of acquisition	Transaction modality	Provenance	Recipient
Valenzuela Llanos, Alberto	Chile	Untitled/1913	Purchase	No information	No information
		<i>Arbrisseaux en fleurs</i> /1924	Purchase	Galerie Georges Petit	Musée du Luxembourg
Zárraga, Ángel	Mexico	<i>Angel</i> /1926	No information	Salon du Franc	Musée du Jeu de Paume
		<i>Nu</i> [Etude pour une architecture de Auguste Perret]/1937	Purchase	No information	State attribution- RMN
		<i>La partie de football</i> /1926	Donation from the artist to the State	No information	RMN
		<i>Portrait de Mme Zarraga</i> /1924	Donation by René Philipon	René Philipon Collection	RMN
		<i>Portrait de Pierre Bonnard</i> /1924	Donation by René Philipon	René Philipon Collection	RMN
		<i>La baignade</i> /1925	Donation by René Philipon	René Philipon Collection	RMN
		<i>Portrait de M. Philipon</i>	Donation by René Philipon	René Philipon Collection	RMN
FEMALE ARTISTS	Origin	Works/Date of acquisition	Modality	Provenance	Recipient
Amaral, Tarsila do	Brazil	<i>Composition</i> [A cuca]/1926	Artist Donation	Salon du Franc	Musée de Grenoble
Boggio, Emile <sup>38</sup>	Venezuela	<i>Un prunier de mon jardin au soleil</i> /1919	Purchase	No information	Musée du Luxembourg
Kahlo, Frida	Mexico	<i>Portrait de l'artiste</i> /1939	Purchase	Galerie Renou et Colle	Musée du Jeu de Paume
Malfatti, Anita	Brazil	<i>Figure</i> /1926	No information	Salon du Franc	Work not found/lost <sup>39</sup>

FEMALE ARTISTS	Origin	Works/Date of acquisition	Modality	Provenance	Recipient
Sacco, Carmem	Peru	<i>Sirène dans un bal masqué</i> /1926	No information	Salon du Franc	In 1930, the work was transferred to Marie de Nouméa, Nouvelle Calédonie

Table 1 – Artists with musealized works in France, c. 1910–1947

Although these processes have their own history and can be analyzed in their specificities, certain elements are recurrent. Firstly, in terms of acquisition modalities, although in many cases the types of transactions involved are unknown, purchases are more frequent than donations from artists or collectors.<sup>40</sup> In terms of provenance, there are repeated references to the somewhat unknown Salon du Franc. This piece of information prompted further investigation, as we will discuss below. According to these quantitative data, works that participated in gallery exhibitions ranked second in frequency of appearance. Only in one case – that of the three paintings by Carlos Castellanos acquired in 1919 – was the Salon d’Automne identified as the space of provenance.

Regarding the destination of the acquired works, most of them were transferred to the Musée du Jeu de Paume, an arm of the Musée du Luxembourg dedicated to contemporary foreign art until 1930, when it became independent. Some were addressed to the Musée de Grenoble, which, since the 1920s – under the reformative direction of Andry-Farcy – played a pioneering role in France’s public modern art collecting.<sup>41</sup> In 1928, the Musée de Grenoble acquired *Les Boxeurs*, a painting by Vicente do Rego Monteiro dated 1927. In the same year, two paintings entered the State collection, the *Cuca* canvas, donated by Tarsila do Amaral (see Table 1), and *Femme nue*, by Ecuadorian Manuel Rendon, both exhibited in the aforementioned Salon du Franc.

It is worth remembering that other works were sent to peripheral destinations, for decorating French embassies and consulates, for colonial institutions overseas (such as New Caledonia) or city halls in France itself (such as a work by Benjamin Coria, sent to the *mairie* of Vitry-sur-Loire). These types of destinations hardly contributed to the works’ visibility or to the artists’ recognition. In some cases, this opacity prevails even to this day, as works with these kinds of destinations are

40. In fact, in the studied period only works by Ángel Zárraga were donated by collectors. In the period after 1947, these donations became much more frequent, as exemplified by the case of Joaquim Torres Garcia, an artist who had no acquisitions our specific timeframe, but whose works were the object of several acquisitions and donations to French museums from the 1950s onwards.

41. Under the direction of Andry-Farcy (1919-1949), the Musée de Grenoble played a pioneering role in France with regards to the acquisition, musealization and consecration of modern art. It was the first institution to incorporate works by Picasso, Modigliani, Chana Orloff and others into its collection, exhibiting them as early as the 1920s. Several canvases and sculptures by foreign artists were acquired, ranging from the aforementioned ones to works by artists such as the Belarusian Ossip Zadkine. About the museum, see: Le Musée de Grenoble (1982).

42. Cf. <<https://bit.ly/3r2xv5v>>.

generally not reproduced in French virtual databases of musealized artworks. In a scenario so uncondusive to consecration, the case of the Musée de Grenoble is particularly relevant for Latin American artists, since, until the creation of the MNAM, it was a reference institution for modern art in France.

With regard to women, among the five mentioned in Table 1 – four of which were modernist artists –, three had their works musealized after they appeared in the 1926 exhibition at the Salon du Franc. This underscores this event's importance for Latin American artists. It is worth noting that research on women based on data from the Archives Nationales faces several challenges. Although there is a heading especially dedicated to "noms d'artistes femmes" (female artists),<sup>42</sup> only Tarsila do Amaral was found through this specific classification. The rest of the artists appears on the general list, dedicated to "noms d'artist" (artists' names, where they may be confused with men). This is probably due to the language barrier and the difficulty in identifying female first names in another language. Anita Malfatti and Carmen Sacco appear on this list of general artists and are introduced as *M.*, short for *monsieur*, i.e., sir. Frida Kahlo's is particularly interesting: she is listed as "mme. Kahlo" de Rivera, and, therefore, appears in the list under the letter R, as "Rivera," even though her name comes preceded by "mme.", meaning madam. In her dossier the situation is even more problematic, as she is referred to as Frida de Rivera.

To the best of our knowledge, Frida has never signed her name as "Mrs. Kahlo Rivera," but this mistake becomes understandable when one becomes acquainted with the opinion in favor of the canvas' purchase. The text is signed by André Dezarrois, the conservator responsible for the *Musée du Jeu de Paume*:

The wife of the most important living painter in the two Americas, Diego Rivera, herself a curious and talented artist, has just held an exhibition in Paris, at the Renou et Colle Gallery, under the patronage of the poet André Breton, [exhibiting] works of a surrealist character, some of which are charming, especially a self-portrait; before returning [to Mexico] she proposed to leave it to the *Jeu de Paume* collection – where Mexican art is, so to speak, non-existent – for a sum of 1,000 francs. I am therefore honored to recommend you such an acquisition.

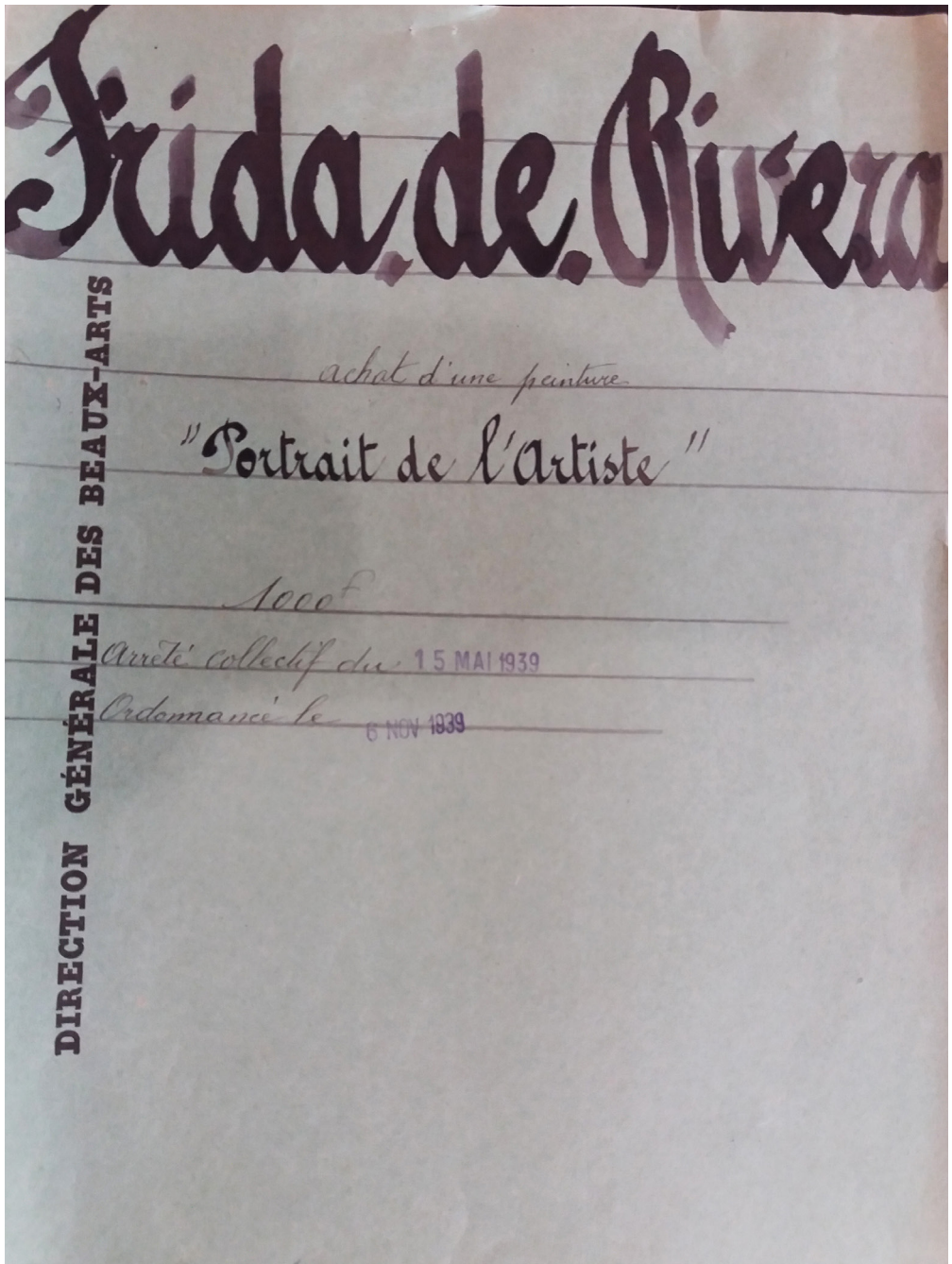


Figure 4 – Cover photograph of Frida Kahlo's dossier. Archives Nationales. F\21\6743. Photograph by the author.



EXTRAIT

PARIS, le 24 mars 1939

LE CONSERVATEUR DU MUSÉE DES ÉCOLES ÉTRANGÈRES CONTEMPORAINES  
à Monsieur le Directeur Général des Beaux-Arts.

.....  
2° - Frida de RIVERA La femme du plus grand peintre vivant des deux  
Amériques, Diego Rivera, elle-même artiste curieuse et douée, vient  
d'exposer à Paris, à la Galerie Renou et Colle, sous le patronage  
du poète André Breton, des œuvres de caractère surréaliste, dont  
quelques unes sont charmantes, notamment un portrait d'elle-même,  
qu'avant de quitter Paris elle laisserait aux collections du Jeu de  
Paume, où l'art mexicain est pour ainsi dire inexistant, pour la  
somme de 1.000 francs.

J'ai l'honneur de vous proposer cette acquisition.

non li voir  
la galerie va lui  
demander l'adresse à  
M. André Breton

Figure 5 – Opinion signed by André Dezarrois recommending the purchase of the work by Frida Kahlo. Frida Kahlo folder/dossier – F\21\6743. Archives Nationales. Photograph by the author.

However, there are scant cases of Latin American artists whose musealization-related documentation includes opinions such as the one above. In a way, these represent the achievement of a long-dreamed “name” in the artistic field. Other cases are also noteworthy, such as those of Carlos Castellanos, Vicente do Rego Monteiro, and also Di Cavalcanti – whose purchase of *Scènes brésiéliennes* was proposed by André Desarroiz in 1939, with a view to enriching the Musée du Jeu de Paume collection with an artwork from Brazil, a country that,

as he pointed out, was virtually absent from museum collections (Figure 6). However, several other processes in Archives Nationales processes have nothing but a cover – these are but empty dossiers which, generally speaking, have one element in common: their link to Salon du Franc.

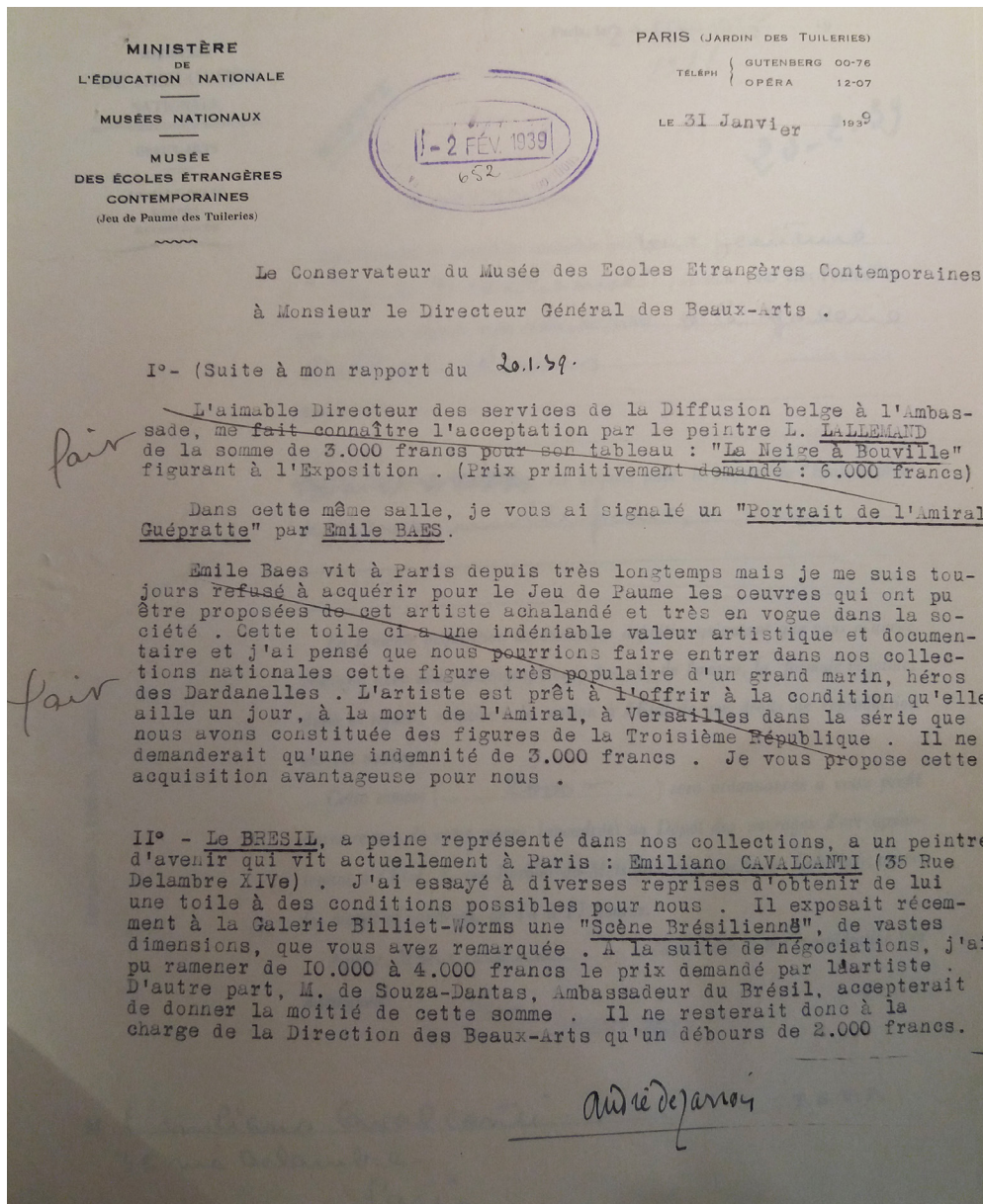


Figure 6 – Opinion signed by André Dezarrois recommending the purchase of *Scène Brésilienne*, a canvas by Di Cavalcanti. Archives Nationales Dossier/Di Cavalcanti Folder. F\21\6730. Photograph by the author.

43. Waleffe (1926, np, our translation). In the original: "Paris est habité par les peintres et sculpteurs du monde entier. Quand ils sont devenues célèbres, ils croient avoir vers la France une dette intellectuelle. L'appel du Maréchal Joffre pour la contribution volontaire à la défense financière du sol français a provoqué chez eux un grand élan".

## THE SALON DU FRANC

Among the 28 artists mentioned in Table 1, 11 had works exhibited at Salon du Franc. The event was held in 1926 at the Palais Galliera. It brought together 142 artists from 36 countries and was sponsored by the *Paris-Midi* newspaper, besides having the support of several embassies and consulates. The Salon du Franc was a charitable collective event in which the paintings and sculptures on display had their sales values dedicated to France's benefit. The objective was to collaborate in the country's reconstruction, since it was still experiencing the consequences of the First World War. Some of the exhibited works had been donated to French institutions, enriching their collections and, as we intend to suggest, also endowing their donors with considerable prestige. According to the preface to the event's catalog, written by Maurice de Waleffe, press secretary for Latin Europe and South America:

Paris is inhabited by painters and sculptors from all over the world who come here to study. When they become famous, their belief is that they have contracted an intellectual debt with France. Marshal Joffre's call for a voluntary contribution to the financial defense of French soil provoked in them a great *élan*.<sup>43</sup>

The organizing committee of the *salon* was chaired by the Swedish artist Rolf de Maré, and was also composed by Waleffe, its vice-president, and by the Portuguese artist Canelas da Silva Quilhôa, as a secretary. The committee was assisted in the sale of these works by Mr. Schoeller, responsible for the Georges Petit gallery. The event also had the support of several French political and cultural authorities, such as the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the director of the Beaux Arts, Paul Léon, in addition to personalities of the *grand monde*, representatives of international fortunes, such as the Austrian baron Eugène de Rothschild, Mrs. Reginald Vanderbilt, and the Italian collector Marquesa Casati, among others.

In a way, the Salon du Franc was a response to Warnod's commentary on the School of Paris (cited at the beginning of this article), which had been published only a year prior. In the text, Warnod discusses how foreign artists could pay off the debts they owed to the "artistic homeland" that had welcomed and stimulated them. According to the salon's catalog, the artists' debt would be paid by way of their enthusiasm in participating in the entire endeavor – as far as we know, the only admittedly charitable artistic event of the period.



Among the 142 artists present, many were Russian, German, Belgian, Polish, Spanish, Italian, etc. There were also some Latin Americans: the Peruvians Luis Alberto Acuña, Jean Manuel Cardenas Castro and Carmen Sacco; the Mexicans Benjamin Coria and Ángel Zárraga; the Uruguayans Carlos Alberto Castellanos and Pedro Figari, and the Brazilians Toledo Piza, Anita Malfatti and Tarsila do Amaral. They appeared next to names who enjoyed significant success at the time, such as Foujita, who signed the catalog vignette, as well as Chagall and Van Dongen, Juan Gris and a few women like Alice Halicka, Chana Orloff and Maria-Mela Muter, among others. Certainly, their participation in the *salon* demonstrates that they had a good reputation in the French artistic environment, together with some degree of social insertion and respectability, and also that they acquiesced under the force of the idea that they owed a debt to France.

However, these artists' donations may have brought gains not only for their recipients, but for the donors themselves. In a consultation to the Archives Nationales folders of Brazilian artists, especially those referring to Anita Malfatti and Tarsila do Amaral, it becomes clear that the *salon* was the reason they both started to have their works incorporated into public French collections, and thus mentioned in the official documentation. Both dossiers are, however, empty: their covers only contain information regarding the work's provenance (Salon du Franc), lacking any images, receipts or notes.

In Tarsila's case, detailed information about the work in question is only available at the Musée de Grenoble. The documentation archived there makes it clear that the canvas referred to as *Composition* (whose title was in fact *Cuca*) was the result of a donation by the artist, not an acquisition, as is sometimes believed.<sup>44</sup> This was a strategic gesture since, through it, the artist managed to include one of her works in a French public collection. Donations to Salon du Franc were, therefore, a good (and rare) opportunity for insertion the aforementioned artists did well to take advantage of. The acquisition of modern works of art by way of purchase practically did not exist in the 1920s, becoming a little more relevant in the 1930s, during the Front Populaire period. The large contingent of Latin Americans who developed their work in the 1920s had no way to predict, of course, that the ensuing years would be much more friendly to costly acquisitions – in this sense, during the period in question, donations were an excellent strategy for artists to incorporate their works into public collections.

Collector donations were even rarer than artist donations, as they presupposed three indispensable conditions: the presence of works in a private collection (few artists enjoyed this outcome); a donor who desired to let go of his/

her works in favor of public collections; a museum commission willing and able to determine that the works offered by a collector were of public interest.

In this sense, offering works to the Salon du Franc emerged almost as a collective opportunity for foreigners to donate their works and see them accepted by public museums. This was a shortcut towards a certain level of prestige, which artists could mobilize in their careers and which became relevant in their countries of origin, a sign that they had achieved success abroad.

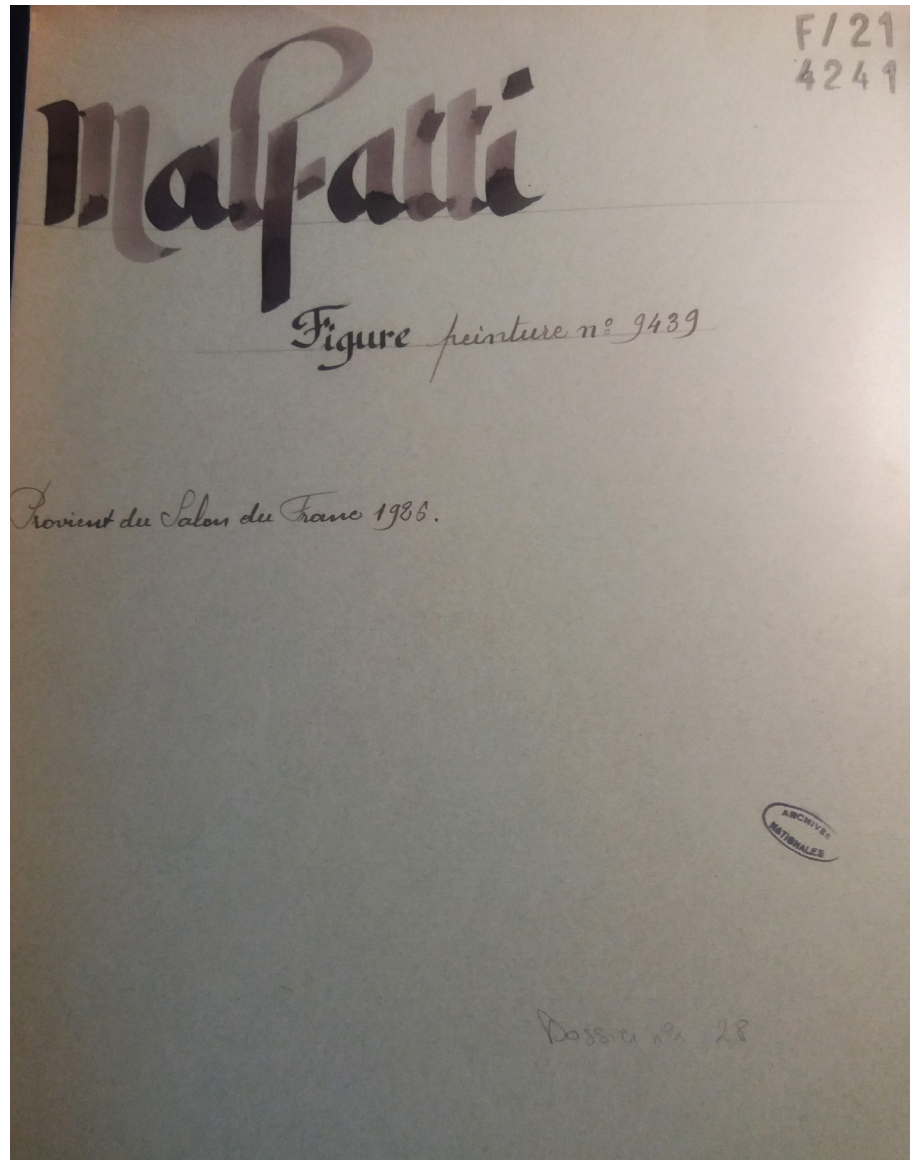


Figure 7 – Anita Malfatti’s dossier folder. Archives Nationales. Details: in the bottom-right, handwritten: “Dossier vide”. Archives Nationales. F/21/4241. Photograph by the author.



Figure 8 – Cover of Tarsila do Amaral’s dossier/folder. Archives Nationales. F\21\4725. Photograph by the author.

Unfortunately, folders for artists linked to the Salon du Franc are completely empty, and this is not true only of Anita and Tarsila. These processes contain no opinions, critical texts or any other notes, which makes more in-depth analyses on the donations’ procedures and its related manifestations of merit unfeasible.

The Salon du Franc is a minor episode in the history of French art, rarely remembered or even mentioned by studies on salons of the period. Nevertheless, it is hardly insignificant when it comes to the history of Latin American artists in France. At this point, however, the lacunar character of the available sources stands in the way of a deeper understanding of the salon.

## THE PRESENCE OF LATIN AMERICAN ARTISTS AT THE MUSÉE NATIONAL D'ART MODERNE (1942/1947)

45. The *Art Vivant* magazine was one of the most important French art magazines of the 1920s. It was first published in 1924 by Florent Fells, and its publication ended in 1939. According to Béatrice Joyeux-Prunel, it was one of the three main art magazines in France: “Trois revues comptaient pour l’actualité artistique parisienne dans l’entre-deux-guerres: *L’Amour de l’art* (fondé en 1920), *L’Art vivant* (1925) et les *Cahiers d’Art* (1926). Toutes trois d’apparences similaires (format 4°, une quarantaine de pages de textes et des reproductions), elles se distinguaient par leur périodicité (mensuelle pour les deux derniers, bihebdomadaire pour *L’Art vivant*), leur prix (*L’Art vivant* étant moins cher), donc par le public qu’elles visaient – et par l’art qu’elles soutenaient. Elles ne favorisaient pas particulièrement l’innovation”. Joyeux-Prunel (2017, p. 49).

46. Michaud (1996).

47. Léonce Bénédite, art historian, was director of the Musée du Luxembourg between 1892 and 1925.

48. The magazine presents him as a “critique d’art, marchand de tableaux; fondateur de la revue *Der Querschnitt*. Propriétaire de galeries d’art à Dusseldorf, Berlin, Cologne, Francfort”.

Since the 1920s, there were discussions on the need for the creation of specialized modern art museums in France. In 1925, for example, the magazine *Art Vivant*<sup>45</sup> carried out a survey alongside artists, critics, collectors, intellectuals and museum commissioners, who answered two questions: (1) is it necessary to create a museum dedicated to modern art?; (2) who would be the first ten artists whose works should be acquired by such an institution?<sup>46</sup>

The poll was a reaction to the crisis in Musée du Luxembourg, triggered by the succession rites surrounding its former director, Léonce Bénédite.<sup>47</sup> From the beginning, the institution loomed under the shadow of an uncertain future: it was sometimes perceived as “a passageway museum” since, after ten years of the artist’s death, works exhibited there had to be sent to the Louvre, where they would remain indefinitely. Luxembourg’s fragility was accentuated insofar as – during the first decades of the 20th century, when the Academy had already lost much of former glory – its acquisition policy continued to pursue the “official taste.” With Bénédite’s death in 1925, favorable circumstances had emerged for discussion on the museum’s future.

Behind the idea of a *French modern art* museum, there were two issues at stake. The first involved the term *modern*. How to define “art vivant”? This was no simple task. In the face of such a great plurality of styles and schools, how could one choose the present’s most representative works? For those who were in tune with the precepts of modern art, much of the production acquired by the museum during the last few decades was seen as outdated art perpetuating an obsolete tradition. For others, however, works produced according to the canons of the French School of Fine Arts were an expression of true artistic knowledge, rising above the rules and preferences of the present, regarded as mere fads.

Second, and no less important, was the question as to who should be represented in a *French modern art* museum. This had been a sensitive issue since at least 1922, when the works of foreign artists had been transferred from the Musée du Luxembourg to the Musée du Jeu de Paume. In a sense, this meant that they finally had a place of their own since, prior to that, French contemporary production with a modernist orientation had no dedicated space, as previously discussed. Furthermore, some believed that the better modernist works by French nationals had already been acquired by collectors or foreign institutions and, therefore, would no longer be available in the country. In this regard, the comments by Gallerist Albert Flechtheim<sup>48</sup> are exquisite. Says he:

Foreign art lovers come to Paris to study contemporary art but, finding nothing in the museums, they must walk Rue La Boétie or Rue Laffitte in order to find out what is going on in the country. In museums, they meet the impressionists, but no Seurat canvas. The paintings of our time can only be found in the hands of *marchands*.

German museums started to incorporate contemporary painting before 1914. Matisses can still be found at the Folkwang Museum in Hage, however they have recently been dispatched to Essen, Frankfurt and Munich; Derains can be found in Cologne and Essen; Vlamincks in Barmen, Elberfeld, Cologne, Bremen, Hamburg; Maillol bronzes at the Folkwang in Munich, in Ulm and at the National Gallery in Berlin.

A Georges Braque has just been purchased for the Essen Museum, a Juan Gris for the Cologne one, a painting by Marie Laurencin for the Museum d'Ulm (Danube), some Pascin works for museums in Bremen, Dusseldorf, Dresden, and some Vlamincks for Dortmund, Dusseldorf.

My opinion is: a museum of contemporary French art is absolutely necessary if France is to conquer the whole world for vivant artists.

It is up to the French to judge which artists should enter the collection first. However, I believe that, although there are some other artists to be first acquired for our museums – Henri Rousseau, Georges Rouault, Maurice Utrillo, Fernand Léger – these should not be excluded.<sup>49</sup>

This commentary is indicative of the degree to which modern French art was being sold to foreign countries that had already started institutionalizing the movement, creating their modern art museums long before France. This process was particularly advanced in Germany. Flechtheim explicitly points out that a French person interested in modern art could only find avant-garde works in art galleries, i.e., in temporary exhibitions. It was urgent to create a museum of modern art in Paris, and it was up to “the French” to choose “their artists.”

The national criterium effectively defined the entire debate. The list obtained from the interviewees' responses to the query by *Art Vivant* magazine is suggestive. The top-ranked artists elected to figure as part of the future museum's collection were the following: Henri Matisse (26 votes); André Derain (20); André Dunoyer de Segonzac (19 votes); Pablo Picasso, Pierre Bonnard, Aristide Maillol, Maurice Utrillo (18 votes each); Antoine Bourdelle, George Braque (14 votes each); Vlaminck and Georges Rouault (13 votes each).<sup>50</sup> Only two foreigners stand among the most important modern artists: Pablo Picasso, and, in a lower position, Van Dongen, who, uncoincidentally, had opted to become a French national.<sup>51</sup>

However, the Musée National d'Art Moderne would only be inaugurated many years later. Since the 1930s, during the Front Populaire government, several acquisitions had been made to build the collection of the future museum, which was scheduled for opening in 1937, during the International Exposition to be held in Paris. In fact, two imposing twin buildings at Quai Tokyo had been envisioned in 1924, part of the plan

49. Flechtheim (1925 apud MICHAUD, 1996, p. 68-69, our translation). In the original: L'amateur étranger venant à Paris pour étudier l'art contemporain, n'en trouvant pas dans les musées, doit parcourir la rue La Boétie ou la rue Laffitte pour voir ce qui se passe chez vous. Dans les musées, il trouve des impressionnistes, mais aucun tableau de Seurat.

Les peintres de notre époque ne se trouvent que chez les marchands.

Les musées allemands ont déjà commencé à adopter de la peinture contemporaine avant 1914. On trouve des Matisses dans le musée Folkwang de Hage, transporté entre temps à Essen, à Francfort et à Munich; des Derain à Cologne et à Essen, des Vlaminck à Barmen, Elberfeld, Cologne, Brême, Hambourg; et des bronzes de Maillol dans le Folkwange, à Munich, Ulm et dans la Galerie National de Berlin.

On vient d'acheter un Georges Braque pour le musée d'Essen, un Juan Gris pour le musée de Cologne, un tableau de Marie Laurencin pour le musée d'Ulm (Danube), des Pascin pour les musées de Brême, Dusseldorf, Dresde et des Vlaminck pour Dortmund, Düsseldorf.

Voilà mon opinion:

Un musée d'art français contemporain est absolument nécessaire, si la France veut conquérir pour des artistes vivants le monde entier. C'est aux Français à juger quels artistes doivent y entrer les premiers. Mais je crois que les artistes achetés par nos musées et quelques autres encore – en premier lieu Henri Rousseau, Georges Rouault, Maurice Utrillo, Fernand Léger – ne devraient pas manquer”.



50. For more details, see Michaud (1996, p. 170-171).

51. The only other foreign artist to appear among the top-thirty is Kees Van Dongen, with six votes. It is important to note that each respondent could name up to ten artists.

52. Georges Huisman, who was a Republican and a Jew, was replaced by Louis Hautecoeur in the Direction des Beaux Arts. This meant the replacement of a modernist supporter by a more conservative director. Cf. Ory (1994, p. 817-818).

53. Bertrand Dorléac (2017, p. 121, our translation). In the original: "C'est au coeur de 1942 que le Musée d'Art Moderne ouvre ses portes à la surprise générale, présentant un tiers environ de ses collections d'oeuvres contemporaines demeurées à Paris ou ramennés de province pour la circonstance [...]".

54. Bertrand Dorléac (2017, p. 122).

55. The author's book comprehensively addresses the question of the resumption of the French artistic tradition under a nationalist perspective during the period from 1939 to 1944.

56. Bertrand Dorléac (2017, p. 122).

57. It is known as a first rehearsal because this first configuration of the Musée National d'Art Moderne was available to the public between August 1942 and April 1944. Afterwards, the museum would only be definitively reopened in 1947.

for inaugurating the Musée National d'Art Moderne alongside the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville in Paris. However, construction had to be postponed due to the outbreak of World War II and its profound impacts over the French population.

Between 1939 and 1944, France was occupied by Germany. With this radical change in regime, several of the names active during the Front Populaire government found themselves removed from their positions, either by virtue of their direct participation in the war, their forced removal and/or their action against the collaborationist state.<sup>52</sup> The dreams of founding a modernist museum were interrupted. However, in 1942, an iteration of what would eventually become the new Museum of Modern Art was hastily inaugurated, with a view to avoiding the occupation of the space by the German authorities, who wished to convert the place into a weapons depot. According to Laurence Bertrand Dorléac, in the summer of 1942, "the Musée de l'Art Moderne opened its doors, to general astonishment, presenting around a third of its contemporary art collections ...."<sup>53</sup> The Palais de Tokyo witnessed a French art exhibition organized by Louis Hautecoeur, appointed by Pétain to replace Georges Huisman as Directeur des Beaux-Arts, and assisted by Pierre Ladoué and Bernard Dorival, chief and deputy conservatives, respectively, of the Musée National d' Art Moderne.<sup>54</sup>

Although we were unable to locate the exhibition's catalog, Dorléac's book relied on articles published in the press to provide a list of artists – who were contemplated because they were considered representative of the "French artistic tradition."<sup>55</sup> The selected pictorial artists were the following: Yves Alix, Asselin, Bissière, Bonnard, Braque, Brianchon, Céria, Chapelain-Midy, Chastel, Maurice Denis, Derain, Dunoyer de Segonzac, Charles Dufresne, Friesz, Goerg, Gruber, Gromaire, La Fresnaye, Lapicque, Lautrec, Fernand Léger, Legueult, Lhote, Lurçat, Marquet, Matisse, Pignon, Rohenr, Rouault, Roussel, Tanguy, Vallotton, Vuillard, Walch, and Waroquier. As sculptors, the exhibition had Bacque, Belmondo, Bourdelle, Bouret, Delamarre, Despiau, Drivier, Gasq, Gaumont, Gimond, Maillol, Pommier, Pompon, Jeanne Poupelet, Puech, Wléric, and Yencesse.<sup>56</sup>

All were French. Emblematic names of the School of Paris, such as Picasso, Gris, Modigliani, Foujita, Chagall, Soutine, among many others, were unceremoniously excluded. Interestingly, only one woman artist was chosen to be part of the ensemble: sculptor Jeanne Popuelet. During the first inauguration of France's National Museum of Modern Art, under the auspices of the Vichy government, foreigners and women were not particularly welcome.<sup>57</sup>

With the end of the war in 1945, former French civil servants were returned to their jobs and some once forgotten projects were resumed. This is the case of Jean Cassou, for instance. After several years as a member of the Resistance, he

was promoted to a leadership position in the Musée National d'Art Moderne, becoming its first director after the museum's official inauguration in 1947. In the 1930s, he had kept a watchful eye over French collections' modernization process, ordering or recommending the purchase by the State of several works by modern artists – including many foreigners – with a view to the inauguration of the museum in 1937 (which did not materialize for the reasons explained above).

Finally, on June 9, 1947, the Musée National d'Art Moderne opened its doors in the west wing of the Palais de Tokyo. The inauguration relied on a combination between the Écoles Étrangères collections gathered at the Musée du Jeu de Paume and the French contemporary collection which belonged, until that point, to the Musée du Luxembourg. It remained there until 1977, when it was transferred to its current headquarters, the Centre Georges Pompidou. It is interesting to note that France inaugurated its first modernist museum practically at the same time these appeared in "latecomer" Latin American countries. In Santiago de Chile, for instance, the Museo de Arte Contemporáneo [Contemporary Art Museum] was opened in 1947, at a building known as El Partenón de Quinta Normal.<sup>58</sup> In Brazil, the Museum of Modern Art of São Paulo and its counterpart in Rio de Janeiro were opened in 1948. In Argentina, the Museo de Arte Moderno de Buenos Aires was founded in 1956.<sup>59</sup> In Mexico, the Museum of Plastic Arts at the Palacio de Bellas Artes had been exhibiting contemporary Mexican artists since 1947 – especially those linked to muralism, such as Siqueiros, Rivera and Orozco. However, this incorporation was nationalist in character, an ode to the national heroes represented in mural paintings. The National Museum of Modern Art was opened in 1958.<sup>60</sup>

The inauguration of MNAM in 1947 was a veritable milestone, the fulfillment of a collective project nurtured since the 1920s. But what was the Latin American presence during this important occasion? In 1947, about 3,000 works were shown to the public, most of them from previous State acquisitions. These were compounded by a few inclusions made during the Occupation years. Moreover, some significant donations were made by the artists themselves in 1947. Among them, Picasso's is an emblematic one: approximately eleven canvases by an artist of considerable renown, who paradoxically sustained a minor institutional presence.<sup>61</sup> Additionally, Russian painter Marc Chagall – another example of an artist whose reputation stood in stark contrast to the presence of his works in French collections – donated seven canvases. In both cases, Jean Cassou's role was instrumental in filling the gaps in existing collections.<sup>62</sup>

The Museum's catalog, published at the time, provides us with knowledge on the rooms' layout as well as the artists and works present therein. The organization of the museum is well explained in a preface by Cassou:

58. I thank Gloria Cortes Aliaga for this information.

59. I thank Marita Garcia and Maria Isabel Baldasare for providing this information.

60. I thank Dafne Porchini; Ana Garduño and Deborah Dorotinsky for these details. Regarding Mexico, see Porchini et al. (2016); and Garduño (2011).

61. In this regard, see: Musée National d'Art Moderne (2017).

62. Such donations were purposely encouraged by director Jean Cassou, who, upon taking up the post in 1945, sought to fill the collection's gaps. According to his testimony: "Depuis octobre 1945, date à laquelle je suis rentré dans cette maison, j'ai tenu à combler les lacunes qui existaient encore, en particulier en ce qui concerne quelque-uns des maîtres reconnus de l'art moderne. Bonnard et Vuillard se trouvaient déjà fort bien représentés au musée. [...] Mais l'effort principal a dû porter sur Matisse, qui n'y était représenté que par trois peintures, Braque qui ne l'était que par trois, Rouault que par deux. Tous ces grands artistes ont compris mon fervent désir de servir cet art authentique, cet art vivant, cet art français qu'ils avaient, durante toute leur carrière, illustré malgré le dédain des pouvoirs publics, et on témoigné pour mon entreprise la plus empressée bonne volonté. Il en a été de même de Picasso, qui, par un geste magnifique, a, en mai 1947, fait don à la France de dix de ses toiles, choisies parmi les plus importantes et les plus significatives". Musée National d'Art Moderne (1947, p. III-IV).

63. Musée National d'Art Moderne (1947, p. V-VI, our translation). In the original: "[...] Le présent, tel qu'en donne l'image le Musée d'Art Moderne, commence à l'Ecole de Pont-Aven et aux successeurs de Gauguin ainsi qu'aux Néo-Impressionnistes et aux successeurs de Seurat. Puis les galeries ouvertes de plain-pied au visiteur racontent à celui-ci la succession des écoles, les inventions, des maîtres caractéristiques et significatifs. Le rez-de-chaussée bas est consacré à la sculpture, ainsi qu'à une rétrospective de ce riche fourmillement de talents et d'oeuvres qu'ont produit les divers Salons, richesse d'autant plus vive qu'elle est contradictoire et se présente comme le fruit d'un incessant et fécond débat. Une salle, dans cette partie du musée, a été consacrée aux styles et aux modes de l'époque 1900. Au premier étage, enfin, le visiteur trouve l'expression des générations plus récentes. Afin de rendre vivant tout cet ensemble ou a mêlé la peinture et la sculpture d'oeuvres décoratives, ensembles mobiliers, tapisseries, verrerie, céramique, etc. Et pour le rendre instructif on a disposé dans la plupart des salles des vitrines de documents évoquant la figure et le destin de tel artiste, le climat dans lequel il a produit son oeuvre, les circonstances et les modes du temps qui la vit naître, les rapprochements esthétiques qu'elle suscite".

The contemporary section, a creation of the Museum of Modern Art, begins with the Pont-Aven School, who were Gauguin's successors, besides the neo-impressionists, who were Seurat's successors. Then, the other galleries on the same level tell a story about the succession of schools, inventions, characteristic and important masters. The lower floor is dedicated to sculpture and to a retrospective of this rich swarm of talents and works that the various salons have produced, an increasingly dynamic wealth, contradictory in character, which presents itself as the offspring of an intense and fruitful debate. In this part of the museum, a space was dedicated to the 1900s' styles and fashions. On the first floor, finally, the visitor finds an expression of the youngest generations. In order to enliven this entire ensemble, painting and sculpture are mixed with decorative works, sets of furniture, tapestries, glass products, ceramics, etc. And to make it instructive, there are documents that evoke the similitude and destiny of certain artists, as well as the climate in which they produced their works, the circumstances and the fashions of the time ... [as well as] the aesthetic approximations prompted by this work.<sup>63</sup>

The text develops some considerations about the museum's intended narrative and its impasses. As Cassou explains, there was a desire to organize the works and artists according to an evolutionary perspective, per which the artistic movements and schools would succeed one another in time, successively demonstrating their "inventions" (or ruptures). This kind of narrative was very similar to the one Alfred Barr adopted for MoMA. Based on the idea of an 'autonomization,' it was intended to organize artistic movements according to a compartmentalized, 'sequentialist' view, having abstraction as its apex. This perspective, however restrictive and teleological in character, could not simply be transposed to France. It is a well-known fact that abstraction was never a consensus at the School of Paris: on the contrary. Moreover, while there was a deep-seated desire to build a universalizing narrative (as the text suggests), it was also necessary to account for the pre-existing collection. This comprised a very diverse set of works, made up of acquisitions of a more traditionalist style, carried out by the Musée du Luxembourg since the beginning of the 20th century. These were compounded by the works belonging to the Musée du Jeu de Paume and, finally, by those that had been directly selected by the commissions responsible for the creation of the MNAM, whose work had been ongoing since before the Occupation and which had been resumed in 1945. The exhibition's first floor was a direct manifestation of this eclecticism, since it elected to divide the rooms not according to stylistic criteria, but rather according to provenance. Thus, there were separate rooms for works inherited from the Salon de la Nationale, from the Salon d'Automne, and from the Salon des Indépendants. Across the museum's spaces, the arrangement of this vast, complex and heterogeneous ensemble ended up hampering the clear-cut and unidirectional narrative intended by the likes of the MoMA.

The aforementioned 3,000 works exhibited at MNAM's 1947 inauguration had been authored by 623 artists. It is a vast number, but the exclusions are also



revealing. In a recent publication, I pointed out the extent to which female artists were underrepresented at the time, reaching a total of only 45 names. This means that less than 10% of the exhibition's artists were female.<sup>64</sup> Many notable women artists whose works were acquired during the 1930s and 1940s could have been chosen, including Frida Kahlo, Tamara de Lempicka, Sonia Delaunay and Maria Helena Vieira da Silva, just to name a few. Yet, all the abovementioned artists share a couple of common characteristics: they are women and foreigners, two variables that often overlapped in determining artistic obscurity. This degree of exclusion becomes even more impressive when we think of Latin American nationality as a variable. *Simply put, no Latin American artist, male or female, was selected to appear at the MNAM's inauguration.* It also worth noting that, at the time, the State-owned works by Frida Kahlo, Tarsila do Amaral, Rego Monteiro, Ángel Zárraga, Alberto Lagos, Toledo Piza, and Pedro Figari, among others.

The preface signed by Jean Cassou indicated that one of the main objectives of the new museum was overcoming the division between national and foreign schools. In practice, however, this does not seem to have materialized. According to the author:

The Musée des Écoles Étrangères, once linked to the Jeu de Paume, is now my department. ... But in regards to works by the French School itself, that is, the École de Paris, I make no distinction between French artists born in France and those foreign artists who might or might not have been naturalized French. Both, side by side, have their place in this room dedicated to the French pictorial movement, to which they contributed their talents. Therefore, the rooms dedicated to foreign schools have been assigned to those artists who lived their lives and careers in their own countries, participating in this movement's spiritual life.<sup>65</sup>

Faced with such a clear statement about the solidary presence of French and foreign artists in the same institution, which certainly presupposes an oppositional stance in regard to the nationalist dogmas that had been prevalent during the Occupation period, how can we explain the aforementioned absence of Latin American artists? It is true that at least some foreign artists were represented in this inaugural exhibition: the catalog includes names such as Foujita, Modigliani, Alice Halicka, Marie Blanchard, Zadkine, and Chana Orloff, among others. The criterion for their selection seems to have been their reputation in the Parisian artistic environment, although this was not made explicit.

In discourse (but not in practice), the Musée National d'Art Moderne conferred equal importance to the terms "national" and "modern art." In other words, the artists' origins, as well as their particular contribution to the international modernist lexicon, were decisive factors. In such a competitive universe, standing

64. On the difference in the female presence in modern art museums during inaugurations, particularly in the comparison between the MoMA and the MNAM, see Simioni (2019).

65. Musée National d'Art Moderne (1947, p. V-VI, our translation). In the original: "Le Musée des Ecoles étrangères, qui se tenait autrefois au Jeu de Paume, a été rattaché à mon département. [...] Mais pour ce qui est de l'Ecole française même, c'est-à-dire de l'Ecole de Paris, j'ai tenu à n'établir aucune distinction entre les artistes français de France et ceux qui, d'origine étrangère, avaient été ou n'avaient pas été naturalisés français. Les uns et les autres, à côté les uns des autres, ont leur place dans telle salle consacrée au mouvement de peinture française auquel uns comme les autres apportèrent la contribution de leur talent. Ne se trouveront donc dans la salle des écoles étrangères que les artistes qui ont mené toute leur carrière dans leur pays et exclusivement participé à la vie spirituelle de celui-ci".

out as a foreign artist – particularly if one came from Latin America – was a notable achievement. As we have shown, although Paris has been frequently construed as a homeland for Latin American artists, these artists' possibilities for recognition were in fact greatly diminished, restricted as they were to a few stellar names that managed to have their works incorporated into public collections. And even these stellar artists were not seen as brilliant enough to be featured in the consecrated temple of modern art that arose in 1947, after a great buildup in expectations and investments. The data indicate that, with all said and done, the School of Paris and its supposed openness to the contribution of all foreigners was a heartwarming myth, but still... a myth.

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