

# Global? Contemporary? Latin American? Time Matters in/and Art Today

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## Global? Contemporary? Latin American?

Is it a contradiction to speak of Latin American contemporary art, or contemporary art from Latin America, if we take the contemporary to be a mode of global circulation, particularly in the current art world? In such a context, where the contemporary is understood as global—coupling together a temporal way of being ubiquitously present and a spatial nomadism that assures high visibility—“contemporary Latin American art” seems to carry in excess the sound of its geopolitical site of enunciation and the contextual and historical temporality of its materiality.

This is the case with all the regions of the Global South, for in categories of “contemporary Latin American art”—much like “contemporary Middle Eastern art” or “contemporary African art”—the insertion of the geographical location pins down the art objects to concrete times, histories, and modes of production, and, consequently, to communities and to forms of life that have not entered as equal partners in the networked society of speed, circulation, and financial exchange of the global that is the contemporary. The label of the contemporary is especially problematic for the Latin American, Middle Eastern, and African regions, given that these areas are “from the perspective of any of the art historical subfields rooted in non-contemporary forms of production” (Lenssen and Rogers 1314). In this sense, what would be “Latin American art”—or “Middle Eastern” or “African”—would not be contemporary as it would refer to a set of objects and practices anchored in local circumstances and sometimes “non-modern” Western regimes of temporality.

There are only two ways to resolve the contradiction: either by dissolving “Latin American art” into the global, thus leaving aside its temporal specificity, or by pluralizing the ways of being contemporary beyond the global world market and paradigm of modernity. I would like to take the latter route to think of the ways in which Latin America’s collision with the term “contemporary” might allow us to think of it as primarily a temporal structure, one that, furthermore, is constituted by a large number of multiple and divergent temporalities.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> It is not my intention to engage with the discussions around the notion of the contemporary itself, and much less with the questions of when “contemporary art” begins. If thought

Much like other historical time frames for art and culture at large—modern, Renaissance, early modern, colonial—“contemporary art” is tied to the workings and unfolding of global forms of power, those that, since the fifteenth century and the structuring of the world into a unified form of evolving capitalist circulation, have controlled and slowly systematized, among many other elements, time itself. If we agree that time itself has been one of the ways in which the system has become articulated, has spread its tentacles, and has exercised its power and control, speaking of Latin American contemporary art would present us with a disjointed scene, potentially with more than one temporality.

In the aftermath of the postcolonial and decolonial turns, the arts and humanities have come to acknowledge the coexistence of multiple temporalities, not always symmetrical in their access to forms of sustenance, life, and resources. This simultaneity, as Andrea Giunta has argued, has become one of the characteristics of the contemporary that is able to engulf and systematize all times that become visible.<sup>2</sup> And here lies one of my first observations: global contemporary art is necessarily visible, fully displayed in the galleries, museums, and biennials or triennials that have mushroomed in numerous places around the world. Yet we know that most art remains, in these terms, not invisible but barely visible through something akin to a weak radiance, something at times barely legible that appears, disappears, and reappears, always through this bare visibility. May we call art that which does not circulate in the glory of the global commodity and capital exchange and circulation that makes it highly visible, not contemporary?

From this perspective, questions seem to multiply. Why are some artists from Latin America taken into the whirlwind of the contemporary art world, always automatically global? Is there anything inherent to some artworks that makes them global and contemporary, while others are lacking in this quality? Why are some contemporary artists from Latin America circumscribed to their local or Latin American contexts, never quite becoming part of the global art world? The institutions of the global art world seem to immediately place some on the side of global and universal issues, and others immediately and forever as expressions, examples, and illustrations of local and national problems. In the supposedly post-national grammar of contemporary art this would seem like a contradiction, a blind spot, or maybe just a perverse paradoxical characteristic of the global contemporary scene itself.

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of from the perspective of historical events, is it the end of World War II? Is it the aftermath of the Cuban and Algerian Revolutions? Is it the experience of the dictatorships in Latin America in the 1970s? Is it the collapse of the Berlin Wall in 1989? If thought of from the perspective of transformations in art materials and media, is it the experimental neo-avant-garde practices of the 1960s and 1970s, and the emergence of performance and body art in the 1970s? Or is it the emergence in the 1990s of installation as a non-medium specific spatial practice engaging the spectator?

<sup>2</sup> Giunta's book begins by stating that the text “will maintain that the scheme of centers and peripheries is an invalid one for the study of contemporary art. On the contrary, the notion of *simultaneous avant-gardes* is proposed in order to analyze works that have been incorporated into art's global logic while still activating specific situations” (105). According to Giunta, this simultaneity emerged in the postwar era, where the art world ceased to be evolutionary (115).

In the restructured spatial relations of the deregulatory practices of the “free market,” inextricably tied to the political and economic logic of today’s neoliberal capitalism, global interests outweigh nation and community considerations or barriers. Under the guise of “freedom,” modern inequalities have increased dramatically, producing a state of fragmentation and disempowerment. Global financial capital has reproduced the differentiation of certain sites or space-time areas in a hierarchized global regime of temporality where what is contemporary is what fully participates in exchange value, profit, speed, and ubiquity, while alternative temporalities, linked to use value, are perceived as slow, raw, unproductive, and irremediably local. The result for Latin American art is to be either markedly local, which frequently (if not always) means remaining outside the global cultural circuit, or to be absorbed by the temporal regime of global art.

Contemporary art has pushed the art world to enlarge its borders and move beyond its Eurocentric and colonial matrix, but it has mostly done so within that very regime of temporality. Latin America and Africa, in particular, have in recent years been the focus of much of this attention. The amount of museum and gallery exhibitions showcasing artists “born in” Latin America and Africa (as the wall labels indicate) and some even still “working” in Latin America and Africa; the flurry of articles on Latin American and African conceptualism and abstraction in non-area studies publications; and the proliferation of modern and contemporary Latin American and African art tenure-track positions in US universities are clear indications of this. Yet the art world continues to iterate its own limitations, whereby not all artworks seem equally global, and therefore, many times, precariously contemporary.<sup>3</sup> To be contemporary one must be global, and to be global means one is already contemporary.

By considering a few Latin American artists, all of them highly visible figures in the global art world from the 1990s to today, I expect to achieve two things. On the one hand, I shall offer a possible understanding of why it is that some artists become central paradigms of a global mode with its particular market drives, while others gain their visibility almost exclusively in their local contexts. This global-local divide further defines the question of contemporaneity and temporality. I would like to suggest that there is something in the types of temporalities that artworks of the last 30 years presuppose (and eventually inhabit and give to the art world) that sheds light on why some artists become global and contemporary while others local and non-contemporary.

On the other hand, through this investigation into the temporalities of global contemporary art, I will also trace what could be called an “anatomy of time.” I would like to suggest that when included in the global and contemporary art world, art from Latin America has served to reveal and purge the repressed sides of this global regime of time—the end of time or extinction, the abstraction of time in the labor process and reification, the time of mourning the violence

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<sup>3</sup> I am not suggesting that all artists today desire a global circulation, but it is undeniable that an increased global circulation at multiple and differing scales is part of today’s art world and that it is what has regulated the visibility and temporality of the global contemporary art world since the early nineties. Participating in this increased circulation through the triennials, biennials, art fairs and traveling shows translates into being an “internationally competitive” artist in today’s art world.

embedded in the project of modernity. In serving this role, Latin American art that has been admitted into the global scene performs a revitalization and intensification of the demands of the contemporary art world by including as possible temporalities even what is wasted, rejected, and destroyed by the capitalist regime of time that builds and operates those same destructions and rejections.

There are times that are global and contemporary and others that are not—times that matter and times that do not. Perhaps the latter are discarded, disallowed, or disregarded by the art world because they are not timely enough to become global and contemporary. Or perhaps they are times that resist the demand of becoming global and contemporary and have inscribed in them the desire and conditions of resisting such abstraction.

## Theology

The Argentine artist Adrián Villar Rojas's *Today We Reboot the Planet* was the site-specific installation that opened the new Serpentine Sackler Gallery in London in 2013. The gallery's press kit described it as an exhibition where "[t]he space was re-imagined as a fossilized world of ruins and ancient monuments." This fossilized world offered the spectator clay replicas of everything from a Michelangelo statue to corn cobs, from the body of Kurt Cobain to a life-size elephant. Fragile clay replicas of vases, bones, and animals—with no distinction between art objects, everyday things, organic matter, and inorganic mass-produced industrial objects, like iPods and sneakers. Like the remains of an apocalypse, these clay replicas were displayed throughout the gallery on shelves analogous both to the vaults of a Natural History Museum and to the display shelves of any present-day massive department store. Here and there, visible amidst the broken pieces and remains of everything in the world since classical times, life was trying to find its way through the devastation: plants could be seen sprouting through a dead clay fish, striving to survive; potato sprouts growing through clay vases, feeding off of the mud and water, still present and alive in the replicas. As with all of his installations since 2009, in *Today We Reboot the Planet* Villar Rojas worked with unfired clay, an extremely fragile and unstable material. His artwork thus shared the lifespan of his material of choice: always already brittle, always already in a state of visible decay, of immediate decomposition. When the unfired clay Villar Rojas uses does not crumble into dust during the course of the installation's exhibition, the artist and his "nomadic troupe" (as he calls his crew that travels the world working on each installation) hammers it away, destroying everything, so that not even the fossils and ruins remain. As he has said in numerous interviews, his artwork is "not meant to last." But some of the smaller objects from the show were sold to collectors and collections as "objects uncovered in a future archeological dig" ("Where the Slaves Live 12", a gesso and plaster bowl measuring 35 cm. in diameter originally shown at the Louis Vuitton Gallery in Paris in 2014, was auctioned in 2015 at the Public Art Fund for \$25,000).

Fossils and ruins have been at the center of Villar Rojas's site-specific ephemeral projects since 2009, when he built *Mi familia muerta*, his first monumental

installation for the second “Bienal del fin del mundo” in Ushuaia, on the southern tip of the American continent. Villar Rojas and his team built a giant whale sculpture made out of unfired clay covering a 28-meter-long paper-thin wooden structure. It was displayed outdoors, as if beached, in the Bosque Yatana, a small forest of Araucanian trees and other native plants. Who and what measures time here and in *Today We Reboot the Planet*? Something like a theological exteriority. Villar Rojas’s artwork presents us with a time so vast that there is no human time, no human experience that could even dialogue with it except in the guise of religion or metaphysics. If Villar Rojas is drawing from the Kantian sublime, it is to go back to God. There is pain and defeat of the imagination when the human faces the sublime, and that unfathomable experience opens space to morality, to religion. Adrián Villar Rojas is one of today’s art world “pet artists”: since 2009, when he produced the monumental whale installation, and then in 2011, when he represented Argentina at the Venice Biennale with a similar monumental installation about the destruction of the world (and of art), he has appeared in all the major stops of the global art world and has been picked up by Marian Goodman, reputedly still today the most powerful global gallery of contemporary art.

In 2011, a similar temporal drive structured Adrián Villar Rojas’s *Poems for Earthlings*, another monumental piece also displayed outdoors, like *Mi familia muerta*, this time in the Tuileries Garden in Paris. A 90-meter-long sculpture made of 15 tons of grey matter (mainly clay) was lying in one of Paris’s most emblematic gardens. Somewhat tubular in shape, not resembling anything natural, it seemed radically out of place, as if it were a spaceship or an object from outer space. In what today is an outdoor extension of one of the world’s most important nineteenth- and twentieth-century museums, Villar Rojas left, as if sent from another galaxy, unreadable poems for us, humans, to read. At the end of the period marked for the installation, the sculpture was destroyed. Like in *Mi familia muerta* and *Today we Reboot the Planet*, we, the human species, are being forced to see ourselves as if from an exterior point of view and shown the state of the world we have made.

Art might be ephemeral in Villar Rojas’s production so far, seemingly not allowing for its commodification, warding off the demand for novelty, as he has said, since it never survives. But Villar Rojas’s artwork also inhabits something like a didactic instance, always moral, showing us to ourselves, granting us the possibility of redemption from our own self-destructive drive throughout history. We humans, with our relationship to art (its massive commodification) and our relationship to planet Earth (its ecological devastation in the name of progress and development) are being addressed by otherworldly life forces. How shall we respond?

Villar-Rojas’s obsession is planet Earth, as many of his installation titles make evident: *Poems for Earthlings*, *Planetarium*, *The Evolution of God*, *Return the world*, *Today We Reboot the Planet*, *La inocencia de los animales*. What was here before we arrived? What will there be after we are gone? In an interview with *The Guardian* for his Serpentine Gallery show, Villar Rojas spoke about the “anthropocene” as his preoccupation: Earth’s human time. The irreversible impact of humans on earth—the extinction of plants and animal species, the pollution of oceans,

atmospheric changes—would be the mark of this geological time. Thus, Villar Rojas is concerned with a scientific time that does not even register within any of the changing articulations of time that have emerged, disappeared, and co-existed since at least the conception of clock time. On many occasions, Villar Rojas has expressed that when imagining his pieces, he wanted to inhabit the point of view of a non-human being, arriving on planet Earth after the end of time, a witness to the rubble of human History. This geological timeframe is always moralizing in Villar Rojas: a theological geology.

Villar Rojas is not a utopian. His work, rather, contemplates and offers time and the human within a classical notion of the tragic, inscribed as tragedy within the narrative structure of theology. What is the relationship between the non-human time that I am characterizing as “theological” and the appeal that it has had in the contemporary art world? One of the strong appeals of both theology and tragedy is that they absolve humans from their responsibility for the state of the world while at the same time exercising a condemnation of human actions. What is the appeal of the time of tragedy to a global contemporary world? Is it just by “chance” that this tragic time is offered to the global art world from Latin America, or, said otherwise, from one of those parts of the world that have never been quite modern? Or is it, rather, that metaphysics and religion are the necessary artificial and superimposed complement of an art world that since the 1990s has been completely conquered by the market? Or is it also that the centers of global capital hunger for the “thrill” of an exteriority, a natural and eternal space not yet under the market’s command but soon to be? Is Villar Rojas’s inclusion in all major venues of contemporary art related to this theological, tragic time that his artwork offers, time and again? In times governed by theology—despite the supposed secularity of all things global and contemporary—and consequently organized through a tragic framework, art saves and absolves the human.

## Reification

Throughout the 1990s, the Mexican artist Gabriel Orozco insisted on making his sculptures and installations “in no time” and “with no time.” There are several examples: arriving in Rotterdam in 1994 for a WATT show just one week before the opening, empty-handed, with nothing made, he produced three sculptural interventions in that single week; driving around New York City dumpsters in the summer of 1998, collecting what they had to offer and figuring out on the spot (in a time-span ranging from 30 minutes to a couple hours) what to do with his findings, and then showing the results at Marian Goodman Gallery under the title *Penske Work Project*; traveling to Japan in 2001 for the Yokohama Triennial with just a suitcase and then proceeding to exhibit that very suitcase as his artwork, with all the new and old travel stickers on it, making visible the object’s nomadic status; or working, again, with trash for *Carta Blanca*, the centerpiece installation in his 1999 exhibition at Portikus Gallery in Frankfurt, which consisted of oxidized emptied cans that Orozco had collected along the beach in Oaxaca and had then proceeded to label with the Carta Blanca beer labels from

the beers he and his friends had been drinking during the weeks they spent together on that beach; exhibiting sheets of lint collected from industrial drying in New York City laundromats for a 2001 show titled *Lintels*, also at Marian Goodman; using photography as a mode to capture the most fleeting and ephemeral sculptural moments never spending time on the techniques of the photographic, interested in its relationship to immediacy. Despite these and many other examples that could be read as Orozco being marked by the speed of 24/7, as Jonathan Crary has described today's world, his work is determined not by speed, but rather, as he has described on numerous occasions, by a critique of it. In an art world where exhibitions are planned years in advance, he replied with the opposite: here's art, made in no time. Art is effortless, no need for grandiose gestures. It is in the everyday, in the banal. Nothing special is required. It all has to do with looking where nobody had looked before, or in rediscovering something old because of its novel placement.

This immediacy and consumption are proper of today's world markets—one can buy anything from anywhere, get everywhere from anyplace, and ever more rapidly. The temporality of immediacy and ease present in Orozco's work is a sign of market times and not a critique of it, as one might first think when confronted with a solo show at a prestigious art gallery consisting mainly of yogurt caps hung on the wall. The ease does not speak to an outside of the labor time of capital but to a key form of time in the neoliberal era. Orozco's work is both critical of this temporal structure—he gives the art market back its own detritus, drawing attention to the perverse relationship between value and waste—and complicit with it, since this conception of time is at the foundation of the productivity required by the ever-expanding circulation of art in a global market. As his work reveals the absurdity of the demands of the expanding art world, it becomes the very object that the art world demands. What Adrián Villar Rojas is today, in terms of visibility and of being, perhaps, the artist of this decade, Orozco was for the 1990s. Not the only one, of course. But definitely the only Latin American artist who became the poster child for the new art forms and art circulations—global, contemporary—which emerged in the early nineties.

Orozco has repeatedly radicalized the contrast in scale between the time spent on the production of a work of art and the final art object itself. Furthermore, that work of art is assigned a market value, whereby Orozco would also apparently be critiquing the emptiness and arbitrariness of such exchange value. His provocative gesture could be summarized as “*no time equals high value.*” The now iconic yogurt caps from his first solo show in New York City in 1994 at Marian Goodman are a case in point—the minimal, almost absurdly non-existent time of securing and then placing the yogurt caps on the gallery walls—despite one of the caps revealing that it had been purchased months before, when it had been hammered to the wall in his apartment while he took his time to realize if it worked, or if it even was something worth showing.

One of Orozco's recurring showcased pieces since the mid-nineties has been his *Working Tables*. These are tables on which Orozco has displayed miniatures of larger pieces, failed attempts of the larger pieces, objects and models for works

in progress and works that may never be finished—leftovers attesting to his sculptures as the result of a process much longer than could be imagined when only seeing the final artwork. The objects displayed on the tables are placed and stored in standard shoeboxes in his apartment. Shown side by side, they make visible, among other aspects, the time in his artwork. From their first public appearance, in 1996, when they were titled *Working Tables, 1993–1996*, to one of the latest showings, *Working Tables 1993–2006, Mexico*, he has displayed them as time pieces. They have always been explicitly about the value of time, being shown every so often, ensuring that the brief period seemingly spent on the production of the sculptural pieces shown in his gallery and museum shows also had a different temporality, one marked by long gestation periods. In this way, the *Working Tables* function as the dialectical companion to all the swiftly produced pieces mentioned initially, whereby the “instantaneous” artwork in the exhibition space is guaranteed its value through the showcasing of its exact opposite. Nothing is wasted, as everything becomes an artwork. This speaks to the ways in which what seems like play and free time, like the result of leisure and a certain nonchalance in Orozco’s production, are actually the temporal modalities of the global contemporary art world. It is not exactly then “all play and no work” but rather “all work and only work.” The apartment as studio—one of Gabriel Orozco’s trademarks, as Benjamin Buchloch, Guy Brett, and other critics have stressed, part of the nomadic trend of the global contemporary—means that work is happening everywhere. It also points to the lack of distinction between life and art, so characteristic of certain art production from the 1960s to today. But the working tables contain the contradictory temporality at the heart of and on display in Orozco’s work: art seems to have been made in no time—the tables themselves are presented as an artwork made in no time, just the time it took to assemble the objects once removed from their storage in the show boxes—but art also reveals that it is the result of an indeterminate temporal period of probation, gestation, and hibernation.

Art made in no time, that increases its value as its time of production decreases, is fully contemporary for it fantasizes about the capitalist utopia of full automation and the erasure of human labor. Orozco’s work ironically repeats the action of the art market, the action of capital, remaining complicit with it through reification. It produces a critique of abstract time in and through the same abstraction of production and temporality. Is his work negative critique, plain gesture, or just performance?

## Mourning

A deep fissure traversing the entire floor of the Turbine Hall at the Tate Modern between October 9, 2007 and April 6, 2008 was the year’s annual Unilever Series art commission.<sup>4</sup> The cut into the very ground of the institution was *Shibboleth*,

<sup>4</sup> Between 2000 and 2012, thirteen artists were invited to make a work of art specially for the Tate’s Turbine Hall, among them Ai Weiwei, Bruce Nauman, Tacita Dean, Olafur Eliasson, and Tino Sehgal. Importantly, the admission to this area of the museum was free, thanks to the support of Unilever, a “global company selling fast-moving consumer goods” whose purpose was to make “sustainable living commonplace” (Unilever).

Doris Salcedo's site-specific sculpture-as-intervention. The piece took its name from a word which literally means "ear of corn," used to distinguish foreigners who, attempting to hide and pass as belonging to another group of people, mispronounced the word, revealing their true origin as foreigners and unwanted. In its Hebrew etymology and history, the word was used for the first time as the tool of recognition to prohibit some from crossing a river as they fled for their lives, and it has since become a codeword for strategies of exclusion and inclusion and is used as a reference to the danger of crossing borders. *Shibboleth* is a historical symbol of the violence of differentiation as a means to mark some bodies and lives as unwelcome within a society. Through its form (a crack) and title, *Shibboleth* obliquely referenced the experience of forced mass migration, a reality that spoke to Europe and "the first world" at large (Salcedo). It also pointed to one of the most salient consequences of the half-century of violence that has ravaged Salcedo's native Colombia—the displacement of roughly six million people fleeing for their lives over the last five decades. The crack in Turbine Hall was the symbolic opening of the wound that a politics of amnesia insists on covering up in an attempt to seal off into oblivion different forms of extreme social and mass violence. It also performed the psychic and emotional effects that the violent and forced loss of home and place of belonging produces in those who suffer it. The Turbine Hall's crack evoked the displaced subject as forever fractured and broken, and the experience of forced mass migration as that of standing on the edge of a dark abyss. Placed in the only public space of the museum, accessible, free of charge, open to all, and in a place marked by movement, circulation and passage, the sculptural intervention presented the fractured life of the migrant as one producing a collective effect. Salcedo's *Shibboleth* made everyone who walked through that hall experience some of the dark abyss and psychic fracture caused by mass migration. Her intervention turned migration into an experience that marked everyone, even if in different ways. Even when covered up at the end of the exhibition, Salcedo's intervention left a permanent mark on the museum's floor, speaking to the question of the long temporal *durée* of loss, of loss as a permanent wound even when healed.

Salcedo's tearing open of an industrial cement floor in one of the emblematic sites of the contemporary art world is one of her best-known public works, and one that pointedly speaks to the temporality of mourning present in her work since the late 1980s. *Casa Viuda* (1994), *Orphan's Tunic* (1997), *Irreversible Witness* (1995–98), *Noviembre 6 y 7* (2012), and *A flor de piel* (2013) are among some of Salcedo's works that "invoke bodies shelved and forgotten," in the words of Nancy Princenthal, who has characterized Salcedo's work as one of "mournful Minimalism" (43). To the swift erasure of the lives of those affected by contemporary political forms of violence, Salcedo's art has responded with objects, installations, and performances that are meant to provoke a somber contemplation of absence. Her work does not offer a graphic presence nor any attempt at the figuration of what is no longer present. On the contrary, it offers objects and situations that underline what is absent: a body, its home, its daily unsung gestures, its life. In Salcedo's work, absence is configured as ghostly presence. Here and in most of her work since the late 1980s, absence is marked. The politics of mourning in Salcedo's work is its insistence on "the interpretation of what

remains,” to borrow from David Eng and David Kazanjian’s moving and brilliant analysis of loss (ix).

In the work of Salcedo, this politics of mourning, this insistence on the remains, is a politics that dwells on forms of empathy articulated through sadness, and as such it risks a misappropriation of the very real losses on which and through which it is articulated. In Eng and Kazanjian’s reading, a politics of mourning focused on remains becomes, in the twenty-first century, “active rather than reactive, prescient rather than nostalgic, abundant rather than lacking, social rather than solipsistic, militant rather than revolutionary” and what remains of loss is a domain of signification (3–4). But Salcedo, while clearly not endorsing the victorious, offers a work enamored of the mourning it stages and the sadness at its root—a sorrow it also hopes to produce in the viewer. It thus remains too close to a hopeless politics. The hopeless politics is what makes her work alluring to the global art world.

Salcedo’s process of minimalist or sublimated mourning became embedded in wooden furniture pieces (tables, chairs, bed frames, doors, trunks), her signature materials in a number of gallery and museum exhibitions, biennials, and public space interventions for close to a decade. *Casa Viuda* was Doris Salcedo’s first body of work to gain international visibility and circulation. Exhibited in New York’s Alexander Bonin Gallery in 1994 and in London’s White Cube Gallery in 1995, the different iterations of this series presented non-functional wooden doors and partial household furniture pieces altered by the artist. The wooden doors had been severed from their hinges and frames, with window panes missing, fabric seared to their surfaces, and bones stitched onto them and embedded into the wood. Sections of chairs and bed frames pierced through door frames. Solo exhibitions between 1998 and 1999 in the New Museum of Contemporary Art in New York, SITE Santa Fe, and the SFMoMA showcased “The Orphan’s Tunic,” “Irreversible Witness,” and “Audible in the Mouth” sculptures from the 1995–99 *Unland* series, where the victim’s absent body and the survivor’s wounded psyche texture the surface of dismembered and reassembled furniture pieces. According to Salcedo, these sculptures spoke “to the condition of life in zones of extreme violence, where to inhabit, to be or to exist in your own private space, is impossible” (Gutierrez 49). Another example of her decade-long exploration and use of furniture is her 2008 *Plegaria muda*, where 84 sculptures, each made of two identical tables, one flipped over the other with dense dark soil compacted between them, filled the room. Green shoots of live grass seemed to sprout from the top table. The measurement of each sculpture approximates the size of a standard coffin.

*Noviembre 6 y 7*, a late work, is a poignant indication that Salcedo’s process of mourning is not only about objects but also about the temporal experience contained in their textures, traces, and relations. On November 6, 2002 at 11:25 AM, a chair attached to an imperceptible wire began fall down one of the side walls of Bogotá’s Palace of Justice. During the course of 27 hours, a total of 280 chairs descended from the roof, some of them alone, others in groups and pairs, all of them painfully slow, covering the entire side-wall of the monumental building. Salcedo’s site-specific performance *Noviembre 6 y 7* took place 17 years after the siege of the Palace of Justice by M-19 guerrillas on November 6, 1985.

The ensuing attack on the Palace for 27 hours by the military resulted in a total of 280 victims and in the building being burnt down.

Critics and scholars have been reading Salcedo's work as an aesthetics of mourning for decades now, and this characterization has situated her work as one bearing and offering a needed and tolerable temporality for the global contemporary art world. The extreme forms of state violence that have shaped much of the world but in particular Latin America in the aftermath of the socialist revolutions, insurgencies, and struggles of the mid-twentieth century paved the way for the neoliberal economic reforms of the 1970s to 1990s. The emergence of the current global and contemporary art world itself, with its need for specific models of temporality, is the product of the imposition of these economic models. The desire and need for justice in the aftermath of state violence in countries marked by states shifting toward market-driven governments displaced the question of public memory and public grief away from the legal and political spheres. Art became one of the privileged sites where grief and rage could be expressed. It is in this sense that Salcedo's work was so quickly taken up by the art world, as it was a beautiful and emotionally moving *mise-en-scène* of the task that politics was no longer willing to take on. The desire for justice became displaced onto and embodied by art, and this was useful for the modern and contemporary art world, orchestrated through and by the growing art market. Salcedo's installations, performances and sculptures became sites for catharsis. The displacement of the work of politics from the state to other sites, among them, art, from the 1990s onward allowed the art world to quickly adopt practices such as Salcedo's that allowed for public displays of "working through" loss. Thus the art world's labeling of Salcedo's work as centered on mourning allows for a much-needed site and time for grief that remains unresolved in the space of politics. Salcedo herself has repeatedly reinforced this: "I want my work to play the role of funeral oration, honoring this life" is but one of the many examples of this (qtd. in Finkel). Salcedo's work thus immunizes the public against the extreme violence that neoliberal governance has produced and perpetuated—a violence that needs to be dwelled on. Instead of, for example, opening up a temporality of mourning that would be at odds with the temporal regime of neoliberalism, engaged and grounded materially in its particular social and local original context, it subsumes and integrates mourning into the system that produced it.

## Translocal

As the previous three sections have shown, some Latin American art has been recognized and included by New York-based art galleries, North American and Western European museums and art fairs as contemporary and global art in order to question the Western regime of temporality from within, while accepting its process of operation. If it is true that this art has pointed out what the contemporary has suppressed, it has done so by suppressing, in turn, the material Latin American temporalities that resist this very regime of the global. There are certain temporalities that have become a signature or brand of Latin

American art for the market-driven art world, staging the diversity that the art market recognizes as a value.

The concept of art that continues to reign globally was developed by European culture and became a universal and omnipresent term as part of Western colonial systems of knowledge. The global art world through its multiple circuits is only possible in a world that was previously colonial and then reorganized as postcolonial. “Global” and “contemporary” are not much more than synonyms for a universal art defined by a Western pattern of circulation and visibility.

Cuban art critic Gerardo Mosquera has argued that only a South-South circuit would be plural and truly international, constructing new epistemes critical of the market driven art scene and its colonial legacy. Such a circuit would establish a “horizontal interaction” that colonialism and its legacy have continuously suppressed (163). Such South-South collaborations have finally begun to emerge. As an alternative to the global art world’s configuration of the contemporary, a different kind of temporality continues to emerge from below, rooted in material experiences and practices of time that continue to operate in Latin America while also establishing collaborations and alliances beyond their specific sites. The South-South collaborative network “Arts Collaboratory” has proposed the term “translocal” to refer to this parallel network to the global contemporary, uprooted network. “Translocal,” we read on their online platform, “refers to localized embeddedness with deep connections to the wider world. AC [Arts Collaboratory] is translocal because each organization has a commitment and connection to its own place, but through AC it is connected and works with a wider geography of people, ideas and practices” (Arts Collaboratory). Founded in 2007, Arts Collaboratory is, according to their self-description, an “ecosystem” of several dozen “like-minded” arts organizations in Asia, the Middle East, Africa and Latin America. One of the shared characteristics of the spaces in the collaborative laboratory is that they function collectively—they operate as platforms that support art practices and research that decidedly function outside the market-driven circuits of the art world. They are places for experimentation, for working slowly, for taking time. The artists and practices supported by these forms of localized embeddedness are dramatically different from global contemporary artists. The arts organizations that belong to the ever-growing ecosystem of Arts Collaboratory engage in expanded artistic practices that have a sustained and continued relationship with their social contexts. Through exhibitions, residencies, classes, conferences, alternative pedagogical structures, arts-related activities for the community at large, and specialized libraries open to the public, the Latin American organizations that are members of Arts Collaboratory—lugar a dudas (Cali, Colombia), Casa tres patios (Medellín, Colombia), Más arte más acción (Chocó, Colombia), TEOR/ética (San José, Costa Rica), and Kiosko (Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Bolivia)—have developed horizontal, pluralistic, collective spaces for art that distinguish themselves as taking time for multiple temporalities to emerge and coexist. They are, fundamentally, laboratories of time.

Openness, process, assembly meetings for decision-making and knowledge exchange, consistent study practices, collaboration, conversing and gathering instead of showcasing and promoting, valuing struggle and failure, unlearning capital- and productivity-driven methods of progress and success, a perpetual

commitment to uncertainty—these are some of the principles of Arts Collaboratory. These precepts all share an openness to multiple forms of temporalities and to allowing art to become a radical experiment with time. This experimentation refuses the times of the market and the current global order—implied in theology, reification, and mourning—and instead looks for times for horizontal commons, for experimentation, for formless art practices that understand art as experiential and, as such, necessarily rooted.

It is in the translocal that time matters. Multiple, disparate, colliding times inhabit the art works, instead of the artworks striving to purge the waste of a global time, and submit to it. There, in these alternative temporalities emerging locally in Latin America, human and industrial time can be observed at a distance, with a critical gaze; new lived temporalities can be experienced. Artworks can lead the spectator into a radical and potentially emancipatory experience of temporality, or they can leave the spectator beholding a metaphysical and quasi-religious time. Artworks can strive to be matter that struggles with any external temporal constrictions and conceptions, or they can reify the many temporalities of an art world whose acceleration and escalation are as fast as the pervasive logics of globalization.

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