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DIFFERENTIAL OR REITERATIVE CULTURE

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#### DIFFERENTIAL OR REITERATIVE CULTURE:

on the operation of certain international mechanisms to set apart the production of Latin American art.

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To speak about the problem of Latin American art means, from the start, to locate ourselves in the perspective of what we have in common; of the roots of our similarity as countries involved in the same continental cause, beyond the differences in our social, historical or political characteristics and that identify each of our countries in their respective ethnic incorporation processes, specifically with respect to their historical and cultural makeup, with the inequalities of their economic developments and their technological levels, with the differences in their power systems and in their political maintenance devices, etc.

This range of differences affecting countries, that although on the same continental block, they are not homogeneous, and the group of procedural variables that specify every historical formation, deserve to be taken into account in order to prevent our national realities from being distorted from the lack of detail of their environments as a result of the simplifying designation (because it is generalizing and totalizing) of "Latin American art"; however, when we notice traits of uniformity, it is possible to relate the different levels of cultural production arising in Latin America to a common ambit of issues that, when outlined, emphasize the constants, the geographic being the most important.

The Latin American countries share between them, as a result of their continental integration, a geographic allocation, translated for them, in a discriminatory manner, in terms of separation or remoteness, of retreat. The effects of the distance and remoteness which mark this continent and separate it from Europe, for instance, entail the feeling that Latin American art participates of a culture (it forms a cultural territoriality) to be discovered or explored, to be conquered. and beyond that, to be attached. It is understood that any expedition to Latin American art is still an adventure (planned from a safe and central point, from a refuge: from the privileged awareness shared by Europe and the United States of their own historical background); or a colonizing venture: a venture to cultivate the uncultivated

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(to make the native productive according to civilization techniques applied by force) or the expansion of the values arising from the grassroots culture, with everything implied in this operation to eradicate the indigenous.

#### THE PREVAILING MODELS OF HISTORIZATION OF FORMS

This geographic remoteness establishes, as a corollary, a kind of historical deferment, called "backwardness" by the main cultures and which implies the setting apart of our culture from the international circuits of artistic significance.

These international circuits are governed by a hegemonic criterion of historization of the forms based on the value of precedence: according to this value any form of ours is scorned as second rate (not first) and, supposedly, repeats the models promoted by Europe or the United States as inaugural forms. The prevailing cultures thus take upon themselves the privilege of Novelty as they claim to be the setters of the rules of temporality that synchronize the international art phenomena in a single frequency, by avoiding all kinds of interferences (discontinuity, deferment, incongruity or the lack of synchrony of forms which, as a result, are improvisers of their own order of temporalization) with the potential to distort the historical domination of the model as it dictates Contemporaneity as the value of supremacy.

The mode of operation of these dominant cultures generally rests on the assumption that their own chronology lays the ground for (and makes evident) any appearance of other forms, no matter the degree of alienation from the history in point, as they are forced to subscribe to a single system of artistic homologation, governing their temporal succession according to a lineal and uniform order, a totalizing order of historical sequence. The mode of domination postulated by the European cultures defends the hegemony of criteria of the historical legitimacy which submits the particular to any secondary manifestation (marginal, peripheral or minority), to the primacy of the forms promoted as models because they arise in the centers of international power.

This historical uniformity principle bans any delay or backwardness, requiring that the movements of the forms (from the different national contexts) be governed by the same order of periodicity; thus the secondary forms exhibited by the peripheral processes are removed from their respective fields of historical validity in their contingent order of appearance (the specificity of the social and cultural makeup which determines the here and now of their appearance as phenomena) is obliterated by these internationally significant guidelines.



## INTERNATIONAL AUTHORITARIANISM IN THE AREA OF ARTISTIC COMMUNICATION

The historical and geographic distance which separates our cultural processes, confining them to areas of international darkness(remote and silent) prevent that these processes be classified in terms of foreign competition; the participation of peripheral countries is only admitted or allowed as long as it does not question the predictable results of the competition (generally favoring the organizers) or the rules of the game of its organization, that is, in so far as it does not question the statutory bases of the Control of Forms imposed by cultural imperialism.

Our cultures relate to the international spheres of artistic communication under the banner of restriction or of prohibition; albeit that they submit to form the ideal poles of "reception" of international messages(as a result of this lack in our reality which maliciously leads us to hunger for any cultural revelation as if it were, once and for all, to remedy this lack or absence of self-significance). Nevertheless, they are not able to qualify as valid poles of cultural "issues". It is difficult for the peripheral cultures to revert the process which condemns them (by the mutilation of their power of dialogue) to act only as recipients of what is imposed, accepters of alien messages.

These cultures of ours, denied the exchange, are as a result inscribed in the passive end of a onesided communication, (therefore imposed) which conditions them as purely suscribing cultures to the prevailing values.

Without considering the specificity of the cultural demand expressed by our cultures in their lacks, Europe or the United States supply information with an apparently arbitrary bias and with an apparently compulsory insertion in so far as it does not satisfy the needs(or wishes) felt by our cultures, but rather it responds to what the dominant cultures perceive to be our needs based on their own assumptions of a self-satisfied culture. The information issued in the form of responses(by the international power centers)does not display the logic of the questions asked by any subject of ours (national and historical) and it does not respond to the need to satisfy our lacks. This results from the fact that the lacks of our cultures are not only the quantitative result of the scarcity of information, but also the result of a qualitative deficit, imposed by the dominant cultures in their monopoly of information, denying us the possibility of exchange by applying devises of centralization of significance and totalization of readership.



## THE PRODUCTION OF FORMS OR THE FORMS OF REPRODUCTION

Our historical and geographic determinants become constraints in so far as they locate the international participation of our cultures under the mode of subordination; marking the inferiority of subordinate cultures, that do not play a main role in the international scenario, purely interpretative cultures (or repetitious) of the original text generated in Europe or in the United States, cultures viewed as subsidiary or depictive.

The setting apart of a cultural process, conditioned by the mark of backwardness which places our countries in the international scene as backward or second rate countries (with deferred cultures) due to multiple effects of the historical deferment, conditions the second place assigned to a culture, traditionally not empowered to think of the production of forms: a culture located under the form of reproduction. As we designate Latin American cultures as cultures of reproduction, we refer to the procedural determinants which forge underdevelopment; in the first place, we mention the fact that these cultures can only contact the international models through their reproductions, that is, through a bypass, in a instance which is not original, it is only a reconstitution (or a remembrance) of the presence of something which is no longer an act: an execution, a live production of a doing with movement that cannot be repeated because it is expressed as a gesture, and personified in the product: the static expression of the gesture stopped in its movement. Something that becomes a remnant, the past signal or the mark of inference of something that happened in the past (its value of event has already been annulled by repetition) and which can only be deduced from the repetition of the copy: international art is offered to us late, as a production of history with a value of postponement. This art is set up on a stage from which we are excluded as actors, even as witnesses. A scenario without our attendance or participation, and that is only told us by recurrent versions of an international translation record turning our cultures into dubbing cultures.

The forms arising in the principal cultures are revealed to us (always in a second and mediated time) as forms already touched up by successive attempts at adaptation and transfer, of transcription to their diverse dissemination supports as accommodating and contemporizing supports of an original Significance already forged by its repetition; determining our cultures as cut-up cultures (at best fragmentary, the works are presented to us cut up into photographic abstracts; already cut away from their situational network) and as cultures of translation.

## RESIDUAL PROCESSES AND SIGN SEDIMENTATIONS

This cut-up information (abstracts, fragments, summaries; barely table of contents or fossil signs of what these works



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were like before the paralyzation of their movements) by the international officially sponsored processing systems of signs and devises, once again undergo another cutting operation to modify their contours in terms of the holes left by this culture of assembly; the historical and national script destined to absorb the international messages, already loose and misshapen by so many consecutive stretches practiced from foreign cultures, so much so that the inclusion of these differing data are not able to become consistent and as a result their support loosens up and yields.

Every country involved in a process of colonization, that is, condemned to receive data distributed by international manipulation systems of history, is defined as wearing patched up clothing. By force, our cultures are filled with gaps (the holes left by these in their sporadic process of cultural cutting up) and residual: their memory is made up of pieces of the history of others, fed the leftovers, hybrid remains of several sedimentations and deposits of petrified languages.

Hence these Latin American cultures are destined to the heterogeneity of the international references assigned to them by force by the metropolitan centers, by the multiplicity of adjustment stages to these points of reference (of accommodation of information) and by the breakdown of its implementation in a zone of historical identification completely disconnected as a result of the stratification of its cultural conformation planes. Our cultures appear to be imposed as they pretend to constitute a tradition (by simulating the authority of that tradition) in so far as the presence of its past is only the result of international fringe benefits. They are revealed to us as powerless cultures to think about their own production because they have been secularly delivered to international mechanisms of historical expropriation.

Because the international inculcation device of signs does not take into account the national specificity of the productive complexes in which these signs are inserted, because the language allocations and the transplantation models signify -implantation, supplantation. They appear as arbiters as they ignore the internal requirements of a culture alienated as a result of its condition as a stand-in because the standards enacted at an international scale do not respond to any procedural logic and they contradict any developmental organicity, these histories of ours appear deprived of social ties; they become falsified as they are filled with odds and ends of information, pretending pseudolineality, imposed in their false continuity by the official will to standardize the significance which hides its condition of overlaid or counterposed.



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The mechanical cutup of materials allocated according to a principle of international conformity, the confiscation of all faculties of critical discernment to allow for the concert of the operativity of the forms to be selected according to our best interests, relegate Latin American cultures to live a substitutive relation with history.

The characteristics described as defining the historical statute of our cultural formations and which continued to act as constraints to the definition of our own parameters of evaluation of a Latin American art with a possibility of gaining independence from the rules of international significance, are, nevertheless, made positive in a critical orientation of creative practices. From here on, this same heterogeneity of the points of reference of our cut-up identity (mutilated, amputated) and then stitched up, this historical fragmentation and the disparity of our productive script, this crossing over of a history so filled with the inclusion of forms, this discontinuity of our identification processes and criss-crossing of our cultural reference systems, lead to practices which include, for instance, in their development, the different (the heterogeneous and the heterogeneity creation) of this disjointed art conscience, instead of tending to hide in a mythic manner - in a so called uniformity of language or lineality of process, in a so called organicity of development, so far typical of the officialistic mode of action. The critical relocation of our histories affects the conceptualization of the possible practices operating in the multiplication of the points of reference and in the pluralization of the forms, as they waive, to this end, their hegemonic will of official predetermination of a historically standardized Significance. Thus accepting the decline of completely separated processes from the international superproduction centers, leading to the social expression of the identity components in terms of inconsistent dissemination and proliferation, because the forcing of cohesion up to now has been one of the official moves to falsify tradition.

WHAT IS MYTHICAL IN AN IDENTIFYING NATURE BECAUSE IT IS ORIGINAL

Because we lacking in a history with nothing of its own with respect to identity, and the mistreatment of that identity, the temptation exists to repair or compensate for the damages of colonization (of cultural lack of territoriality) resulting from the international attachment regime, with the revendication of a myth-like American territory, by the memory of a remote past, previous to these annexations, unharmed because it is remote and legendary. Europe and the United States pay their debt of conscience for the force of cultural hegemony they practice in what is Latin American, by mythifying a continent as a result of honoring its pre-colonial past (what is autochthonous to an identity that must be revived), by the magnification of a nature with a virginity recovered because it is exotic. It is generally expected that Latin American art emphasize its difference (that it justify itself because



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it is different) with its "picturesque" quality, like a stereotype of European representation. It is expected to render account of its geography in the pre-urban nature of a scenery still free of social or political planning (the myth of the savage as a return to nature) and that it account for its history in the pre-industrialized nature of a tradition not yet polluted by progress (the myth of a pre-Columbian past as a folkloric memory of a grassroots identity). It is expected that Latin American art account for itself in the atemporality (or ahistoricity) of forms supposedly pure, because they came before the process of international culturization or the technologization of the languages.)

European art enjoys (profits from) Latin American art by assigning it to a primitive space and time; confining it to backwardness, forcing it to a regression of identity that prevents it from sharing full participation in the historical dynamics (depriving it of any possibility of effective recourse to the updating of its processes) and subjecting it to a past denominated depositary of something foundational.

The savage, the exotic, or the picturesque, the primitive, the archaic surround Latin American art in a framework of cultural legitimacy that is more nostalgic; This European tendency to subject anything Latin American to a discourse on the origin is, moreover, authorized by Latin American thinking itself as it works hard on the historical retrospection of a conscience searching for its primitive nature as the only clue to its memory. This Latin American identity identified as latency (as values underlying the mythic backdrop) is called upon to flourish and emerge again with the truth about its origin and its origin as the truth, finally sharing of the metaphysics of significance postulated by nature as an identifier because it is original.

The desire to justify what is Latin American, conceived as an international difference, is always practiced as long as this difference does not endanger the categories of cultural identification applied by international thinking circles to dominate; as long as this difference can be reabsorbed in the framework of the Identity. As a result of condescendence, in the measure that these dominant cultures do not take into account anything except their own history, these cultures celebrate Latin American art as long as it does not question the supremacy of its regime of historicity, relegating it to an archaic conscience: to a territory free of rationality and therefore free of analytical demands, a territory, innocent because it is free of historical responsibilities for the gestation of its own contemporaneity of forms.



# "DEJA VU" AS A COLONIALIST SANCTION

The force of centralization of the artistic values compromised by Europe or by the United States made the significance of any peripheral manifestation (Latin American, as an example), appear to be dependent, that is, a tributary of the internationalized forms by the metropolitan cultures following a hegemonic criterion of dominant significance. Every one of these manifestations is automatically referred to a preceding or former manifestation assigned to it as an international model, and then it is considered an imitation without setting itself apart from the models by operating a separation from its matrix support. This automatic remission would condemn our culture to becoming merely repetitious; would turn forms into mere duplications, copies, imitations, or replicas, made to an original, patented by the international record, with its sovereignty established on the grounds of its historical precedence.

The forms that shake our history because they are emergent are thus minimized by a significance regime which assigns privilege to a single model of legitimacy of history, and ignores the procedural variables that specify every history as discordant or as a minority, as a dissident from the dogma of Modernity; disembodied, deprived of their own fields of social validation, these forms of ours are thus subordinated to a historical legibility regime dictated by the metropolitan centers which discriminates against them because they are not central, minor or secondary, lateral or peripheral.

The "deja vu" colonialist sanction disqualifies any form of ours because it is repetitive or mimetic, thus turning into backwardness any mark of historical or geographic deferment. Hence the challenge faced by our cultures is to make this deferment significant, to make it operable, to make it positive as a value of a critical operation; the challenge to our cultures then consists in operating the difference in the framework of repetition.

It is, therefore, possible to validate works that in spite of their having been created on the basis of a foreign repertoire of preexisting figures, they are, nevertheless, capable of making these same figures practice a critical redrafting of their original conditions of existence and operation; forcing them to signify here, for the first time, what they had never signified before (be it from lack of urgency, be it as a result of the detente of their stress forces, be it solely as a result of historical calm: because they have been neutralized by the weight of Tradition) and exercising contextural pressures of their geographic transfer over them, making their significance inflexional, subverting their order of precedence by inflicting on them the corrective burden (modifying and transforming them) of our history in its position of conflict with its own discourse. It is possible,

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effectively, to learn how to validate the "construction of our own phrases with a learnt vocabulary and syntaxis" as the highest critical strategy; as a creative manipulation of an international tenacity employed (disemployed and reemployed) to further ends of historical self-significance.

The reinsertion of the international models in an identity context as victimized as ours, implies such a relocation of values that no model can possibly remain uncorrected in this context. That the knowledge of what it means to us to dispute an artistic conscience in a zone as lacking as this one not be modified. There exists no basis of knowledge, no matter its degree of consolidation, which remains unshaken by the earthquake of our history.

There is no form, no matter its degree of innocence, which remains unmoved today by the shock it signifies to cope with the added trauma of our relation to history. There is no significance, no matter the degree of its international guarantee, that is not completely shaken up by its passage through our history and becomes misery or repression.

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