Macy’s Taste in Latino Art: 
Selling the Latin American Fair’s Aesthetics

Lisa Crossman
The relationship between art, economics, and politics is a tenuous one. Art is safer when stripped of its function as cultural commodity and displayed on the white-washed walls of a prestigious art museum—an insular space that discourages speculation of a work beyond its aesthetic value. In the United States, many intellectuals have recognized the opportunistic political and business motivations behind numerous exhibitions of Latin American art in both galleries and museums. Beginning in the 1930s, the public was exposed to Mexican muralism, a movement that ushered in later decades of Latin American art to the U.S. While the role that museums and academic institutions played throughout this process has been examined, department stores’ participation in the display and sale of Latin American art now remains a little known fact. In the first-half of the twentieth century, however, it was widely recognized that major cosmopolitan stores such as Macy’s, Gimbels, and Bloomingdale’s played the part of art patrons and exhibitors before a captive consumer audience.

One of the largest cultural events to occur at a department store during this period was Macy’s *Latin American Fair*. This event was held at their Herald Square location, from January seventeenth through February seventh, 1942, as a gesture of hemispheric goodwill, as well as a means to capitalize on the entry of modern Latin American art into the popular lexicon. The event was a politically timed and economically motivated affair that sought to fuse the individual cultures of participating countries into a simplified, marketable version of Latin America. As part of the festivities, Macy’s gallery housed an exhibit that showcased four hundred paintings and sculptures from Mexico, South and Central America. Due to the size of this collection, the works were rotated through the display.¹ The show was touted by many as being the most comprehensive exhibition of modern Latin American art to date and received much

---

contemporaneous publicity. Macy’s art display was woven in to a constructed narrative that would have shaped the reception that it received and solidified its function as a diplomatic tool.

Macy’s acted as a bridge between political interests and public taste at a time when its status as tastemaker, in the realm of popular culture, held much sway. Macy’s reframing of the Latin American paintings and sculptures at the fair recast negative U.S. stereotypes of Latino culture as positive novelty in order to sell these pieces as a re-contextualized cultural commodity—a product that was meant to promote hemispheric “good-will” to the middle and upper-middle classes. *The New York Times, The New Yorker,* and many other popular magazines published articles and advertisements about the fair during January and February of 1942. One such example is a full-page advertisement that was published in *The New York Times* on January sixteenth (Figure 1). This particular advertisement demonstrates Macy’s objective to show Latin America’s “living culture,” during an important historical juncture between the Americas—marked by the conference at Rio de Janeiro. The publicity and sizeable audience that the fair received suggests that the exhibition played a crucial role in shaping, and reinforcing, the public’s perception and expectations of Latin American art in the United States.

Macy’s *Latin American Fair* was a product designed for consumption by the United States’ public. The fair would have appealed to eager, post-depression shoppers and cultural enthusiasts. Its targeted audience, however, extended well beyond the borders, catering to important figures from the nations represented at the fair. The event was held in New York City,

---

3 Jan Whitaker, *Service and Style: How the American Department Store Fashioned the Middle Class* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2006), 22-24. For a discussion about department stores’ sale of art and influence in this realm, see 146-149.
6 Whitaker, 22.
the cultural and economic center of the United States. Macy’s at Herald Square, the “world’s largest store” since 1924, was likely intended to symbolize the fruition of the U.S.’ promise of economic support and increased trade with Mexico, South and Central America.\textsuperscript{7}

The \textit{Latin American Fair} is an exceptional example of how Latin American art was displayed in the United States during the 1940s. However, I believe it is a useful case study that will generate discussion on the impact of department store’s marketing and display of art during this era. Specifically, this investigation aims to examine the presentation of Latin American art in the United States during its initial phase of introduction to general audiences. While Macy’s fair may seem a bit crude, a bit humorous, or simply preposterous to contemporary readers, its frame was merely an extravagant reiteration of the rhetoric employed throughout the United States at that time. The economic, political, and cultural climate of the United States influenced the form and function of Macy’s fair.

The United States’ political environment in January of 1942 was characterized by unease. On December seventh, 1941, Japan bombed Pearl Harbor, drawing the U.S. into World War II. After having spent the previous three years attempting to woo the Southern hemisphere in to uniting against the Axis powers, the United States was disappointed that their “Good Neighbors” did not unanimously offer their enthusiastic support.\textsuperscript{8} So, in January of 1942, while Macy’s was staging its Latin American extravaganza, the American republics’ foreign ministers assembled at Rio de Janeiro.\textsuperscript{9} The United States’ goal was to persuade all South American countries to sever economic and political bonds with Germany, Italy, and Japan.\textsuperscript{10}

\textsuperscript{9} Pike, 257-9.
\textsuperscript{10} Pike, 258
The presence of diplomatic guests at Macy’s fair restated the desire for hemispheric unity. In fact, Mrs. Roosevelt appeared at the preview ceremonies before six hundred representatives from across the American republics to emphasize the importance of this message (Figure 2). In addition, Jack I. Straus, president of Macy’s, used the fair to promote trade and persuade his guests, including national retailers, of Latin America’s economic potential. Pan American Airways and the United Fruit Company, among others, assisted in the planning of the “travel bureau,” which was meant to encourage tourism in Latin America. The event acted as a cultural conference meant to solidify the United States’ economic support of Latin America.

The personalities that comprised the advisory committee offer another clue to the vested financial and political interests that were embedded in Macy’s fair. This committee consisted of wealthy collectors, businessmen, and representatives from governmental agencies and organizations such as the Pan American Union. Dr. Leo S. Rowe, Director General of the Pan American Union, and John Hay Whitney, who worked under Nelson Rockefeller in the Office for Coordination of Commercial and Cultural Relations, in particular demonstrate that the fair was shaped by the people who were using culture as part of a larger campaign for Pan-American solidarity. These members, along with Nelson Rockefeller, were attempting to sell a particular image of Latin America to the United States’ public.

13 Macy’s (Firm), n.p. See “The Travel Bureau” section for additional information.
14 Macy’s (Firm), under “Advisory Committee.” Macy’s publication lists the following members as being on the Advisory Committee: John E. Abbott, executive vice-president of the Modern Museum; Evans Clark, music critic and consultant for Macy’s fair; Wallace K. Harrison, architect who constructed buildings for Rockefeller and was jointly responsible for the 1939 World’s Fair theme building; Frederick E. Hasler, president of the Pan-American Society; D. Stewart Iglehart, president of W.R. Grace Co. and Grace line, both of which operated in South America; Dr. A.S.W. Rosenbach, a renowned rare book collector.
15 Dr. Leo S. Rowe, Director General of the Pan American Union who organized a Latin American exhibition at the Riverside Museum in New York City in 1939 (United States, New York World’s Fair Commission, and Riverside Museum, “Foreword”). He was honored at Macy’s Pan-American Day (Macy’s (Firm), under “Fiesta Square”); and John Hay Whitney, a member of the Office for Coordination of Commercial and Cultural Relations between the American Republics, the Hollywood division.
In 1942, Rockefeller was the active director of the Office for Coordination of Commercial and Cultural Relations between the American Republics, the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs. This office was created in 1940 by Franklin D. Roosevelt at Rockefeller’s request. Rockefeller’s agency was responsible for promoting a positive image of the United States throughout Latin America. In 1941, they assembled a traveling collection of U.S. modern art that was shown in major Latin American capitals. Rockefeller was also an heir to Standard Oil, which had holdings throughout Latin America, and was the president of the Museum of Modern Art from 1939-41. Due to Nelson Rockefeller’s business and governmental involvement in Latin America, it is not surprising that he was a member of Macy’s advisory committee. Furthermore, it is likely that Rockefeller had some involvement with the fair’s exhibition of painting and sculpture. The Rockefellers, including Nelson, were renowned collectors of art who understood the power of culture as a form of propaganda that could be used to encourage political and economic success.

The tactic of using culture for foreign policy had previously been employed by the United States in the late-1930s as an attempt to strengthen its bond with Mexico. During this period, a number of large Mexican exhibitions were held at major museums, like the Museum of Modern Art and the Metropolitan, in an effort to encourage positive diplomatic relations with the Cardenas administration, which had threatened to nationalize Mexican oil reserves. Macy’s also held two large shows of Mexican works in 1937 and 1940. However, in spite of efforts by

---

20 Indeyh, 342 and 344. A comprehensive exhibition of Mexican art, including craft works, was held in 1937 and another display and sale of Mexican art was put on in 1940.
the U.S. government and businesses, Lazaro Cardenas nationalized Mexico’s oil in 1938.

Foreign investors were promptly expelled from the country.21 Despite U.S. investors’ loss of revenue, the idea of using art shows as propaganda was established.

During the 1940s, Latin American art was promoted through numerous galleries and museum exhibitions throughout the United States. As art historian Shifra Goldman has suggested, the “proliferation of Latin American art exhibits in the U.S.” generally signifies “underlying political motivations.”22 The involvement of IBM, Rockefeller, and the Pan American Union in organizing shows during this era, reveals underlying monetary interests. The display of Latin American art, however, was not confined to museum and gallery exhibits, but extended to other venues that would have attracted a more diverse audience.

Many U.S. citizens were critical of their government’s espousal of a unified America that included all the southern nations.23 The circulation of Latin American art within smaller venues was likely meant to promote the concept of solidarity to a wider audience who had been previously conditioned to distrust their “neighbors.” In 1941, a three-part traveling exhibition was sponsored by the Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs. It was designed for display in spaces such as college galleries and town halls. Three of these mini-shows, which included pre-Columbian, colonial, and modern artworks, toured across the United States.24 Art, as a signifier of culture, would have communicated an increased presence of Latin America in the United States.

23 Pike, 257-8.
At the start of World War II, while the public was questioning the success of the Good Neighbor Policy, department stores crafted their own version of "spin control."\(^{25}\) Macy's was not alone in their endeavor to promote Latin America at a profit to themselves. In 1942, Gimbels, a department store located across the street from Macy's, had a South American display as part of their Centennial Exhibit.\(^{26}\) The South American show, which specialized in Peruvian works, was held at the same time as the *Latin American Fair*. One can imagine the spectacle of one of New York City's preeminent commercial plazas bursting with Latin American images. While the Gimbel Brother's display focused on pre-Columbian and colonial artworks, rather than contemporary ones as Macy's did, both are proof that the explosion of Latin American art in the United States spread beyond museum's walls and played to a popular audience.

The overarching political and economic motivations for Macy's fair created an environment that stripped the artworks of their individuality. The repetitive language used to discuss the event in journals, newspapers, and magazines, was also used in reference to nearly all Latin American art exhibitions in the 1940s. "Good will" became the catch-phrase of the Latin American presence in the United States, which devalued the artworks that were displayed, making them part of the "good neighbor" rhetoric.

Contemporaneous art critics were well aware of the political language that was being used to promote art. As Milton Brown commented in his critique of the Museum of Modern Art's exhibition, *Portinari of Brazil*, this show is "...evidence of a trend. With the United States evincing a growing interest, predatory or not, in Latin America, we will be hearing a great deal about our southern neighbors. Portinari is the first ambassador in what we hope will be a fruitful

\(^{25}\) Pike, 258. Pike notes that the United States tried to hide the shortcomings of the Good Neighbor Policy during this period.

new cultural relationship.”

Comments like those by Brown cloud the works with political and nationalistic connotations. Candido Portinari, then, becomes the cultural “representative” of Brazil in the Museum of Modern Art’s exhibition, instead of an important artist from this period.

Portinari’s art also served as a “cultural ambassador” at Macy’s fair. Candido Portinari’s painting of Morro was displayed in Macy’s gallery during the fair as one of the few works that was not for sale (Figure 3). In Morro, the Slum, Portinari employs social realism to address sociopolitical concerns. The worker and the lower-classes depicted in this image of Rio’s shantytowns frequently figure into his paintings. Portinari has often been described as a “de-politicized” Diego Rivera. However, he is “de-politicized” only because his work has been removed from the sociopolitical context in which it was created. The Slum, within Macy’s walls, is presented as an emblem of Latin America. It is a cultural product that could easily be misread.

The art, while displayed in a separate gallery, was incorporated into a larger context in which a myriad of Latin American objects were sold. While the sculptures and paintings comprised only one section of the fair, The New York Times reported that the gallery was “well patronized.” Each day was dedicated to one, or sometimes two, countries. Each nation’s day was honored by a special performance and visit by a representative from that republic. Macy’s Latin American Fair was meant to introduce the public to the “other” Americas, showcasing

---

30 Crockcroft, 191
Latino food, fashion, music, and art. The variety of events and products would have catered to more interests, securing a greater audience.  

R.H. Macy & Co.’s promotion of the fair reveals its own motivations and expectations. In a publication entitled *Macy’s Latin American Fair, January 17–February 7, 1942*, Macy’s declares that its purpose was to both teach its customers “. . . how [their] neighbors look and live,” as well as to establish long-lasting trade with Latin America. The company further reiterates all the key propagandistic phrases, making it clear that their version of friendship is based on a “. . . free and profitable exchange of the products of the hands and hearts of men.”

In a *New York Times* article from January of 1942, Macy’s encourages the sale products made by the “nimble fingers belonging to poor women,” which would give them the chance to earn enough money to survive. Macy’s tone advocates a sort of neo-colonial relationship with Latin America—promoting itself as the “pioneer” discovering a new market and a paternal partner.

Implicit in Macy’s fair, as in most festivals, was a nationalistic overtone. The event celebrated a U.S. conception of contemporary Latin American nations through their consumable products. As a means of presenting a genuine image of Latin America, Macy’s posted fifty-one photographs of people and places from across these nations at the entryway to the fair. Pseudo-architectural constructions framed each of the fair’s sections. Some façades, like the entrance gate and the Temple of Jewels, were imitations of actual buildings located somewhere in Latin

---

33 Macy’s (Firm), under “Foreword.”
34 Macy’s (Firm), under “Foreword.”
36 Macy’s (Firm), under “Foreword.”
37 Brian Wallis, “Selling Nations,” *Art in America* 79, no. 9 (September 1991), 85-86. In the *Latin American Fair*, as in the fairs from the 1980s that Wallis discusses, the “. . . invented nature of nationality” and the “. . . role of culture in defining the nation for the natives and foreigners alike” becomes obvious.
America (Figures 4 and 5). Other architectural constructions like the pottery and glassware section’s arches represented more generalized designs (Figures 6).

The art gallery’s design coincided with the event’s attempt to feign “authenticity”; it was modeled after the classic-modern Art Gallery in Caracas, Venezuela. Furthermore, the art selection was attributed to the nations’ government officials. Through these measures, the exhibition would appear to represent Latin American, rather than U.S., taste. The architectural facades, photographs, and political guests were meant to legitimize Macy’s artificial image of Latin America.

While Macy’s expressed a desire to educate the public about Latin America through product, much of their merchandise sold was altered to meet their “own specifications for sizes and colors.” Macy’s informs us in their publication about the fair that this event took two years to plan. In an effort to produce merchandise that met their “high standards for quality and taste,” Macy’s “sent down patterns and technicians to help plan with [the] execution” of their product. These statements imply that Latin America is less advanced than the U.S. and that its nations need assistance in creating a valuable product that would meet consumer standards. The use of this third-world, first-world binary, in which the U.S. must play a paternalistic role in helping their neighbors, is, of course not unique to the situation. Rather, Macy’s statements are a mere reinforcement of the neo-colonial relationship that the U.S. continues to enforce.

However, this nationalism, the idea of a Latin American nation, is entirely artificial. It relies on a constructed aesthetic that reflects Macy’s perceptions of these countries. Even the

---

38 "Display Ad 13,” The New York Times, The entrance gate was modeled after the “Ranch Jose doorway,” located outside Mexico City. The Temple of Jewels was, supposedly, “an exact scale replica of the famous Temple of the Warriors in Chichen Itza, Yucatan.”
39 Macy’s (Firm), under “Art Gallery.”
40 Macy’s (Firm), under “Art Gallery.”
41 Macy’s (Firm), under “The Merchandise.”
42 Macy’s (Firm), under “Background.”
background colors used in the fair were given names like "Inca orange" and "Amazon jungle green." These names reflect a concerted effort to sell Latin America as an exotic aesthetic. The concept of Latin America as a single entity is another problem that inhibits a nuanced perception of each country represented. Similarly, the phrase "Latin American" would have affected viewers' reception of artworks, encouraging them to find commonalities between all of the works. The phrase "Latin American Art" causes one to lump many individual works together and to make generalizations.

The art exhibit was meant to function in tandem with the didactic, propagandistic narrative about Latin American culture that Macy's had constructed in their store. While Macy's show likely did expose a wider audience to Latin American art, the survey is probably not representative of works that would have been seen in Caracas. The artworks exhibited were a mixture of those by eminent and relatively unknown artists. Macy's works were probably chosen as models to reflect a set of aesthetic concerns that differed from those of art critics. The paintings and sculptures were chosen by governments to promote an aesthetic that they though the U.S. would accept.

While the first part of this paper primarily focused on an overview of the fair, the final section will examine four additional pieces from Macy's show. The intention of this segment is to further elucidate the manner in which the presentation of the works as a whole might have effected the reception of individual pieces. For the purpose of this paper, I do not mean to offer nuanced readings of these works, but to determine how they would have fit within Macy's

---

43 Macy's (Firm), n.p.
44 Mari Carmen Ramirez, "Beyond 'the Fantastic': Framing Identity in U.S. Exhibitions of Latin American Art," Art Journal 51, no. 4 (Winter 1992), 60-8. While Ramirez' article discusses later exhibitions, her observations are applicable to Macy's fair.
45 The selection of the pieces described is based on the images that I was able to find that corresponded with Macy's list of the paintings and sculptures exhibited.
narrative on contemporary Latin American culture. As Mari Carmen Ramirez states in “Beyond ‘the Fantastic’: Framing Identity in U.S. Exhibitions of Latin American Art,” “Art exhibitions are privileged vehicles of the representation of individual and collective identities….” 46 This concept allows a useful vantage point in which to consider Macy’s exhibition as a whole, as well as the individual works that were displayed. In this sense the works, from the country’s perspective, are meant to represent the nation’s collective identity. To Macy’s they become a profitable object and to the viewer, shopper, the art works become a cultural commodity that shapes the buyer’s identity through the purchasing of a nation.47

Lino Eneas Spilimbergo was a well-known modern Argentinean artist who had two paintings displayed at Macy’s gallery during the fair. Both his *Figuras* and *Arrabal de Buenos Aires* were being sold at Macy’s for $699 and $599, respectively.48 *Arrabal de Buenos Aires* is a figurative work with some suggestion of abstraction (Figure 7). The roads and buildings have been reduced to geometric shapes. While Spilimbergo’s rendering of Buenos Aires’ suburbs is quite different than Portinari’s slum, as seen in *Morro*, both could be linked based on a similar degree of stylization and a focus on figures within a Latin American cityscape. These superficial stylistic similarities would have aided in lumping the works together, detracting from an individualized interpretation of each work.

Gerson Borsoi and Pachita Crespi are two minor artists whose work is virtually unheard of today. Borsoi was a Brazilian artist. His painting *O Morro*, which was being sold for $699, demonstrates a similar thematic concern and stylistic rendering as the previous two images.

---

46 Ramirez, 60.
47 Wallis, 84-91. Wallis’ article elucidates this idea of “selling nations” through culture in the United States during the 1980s.
48 Macy’s (Firm). *Paintings and Sculptures from the Latin American Fair*, 12. Macy’s titled *Arrabal de Buenos Aires* as “Suburbio de Buenos Aires.”
discussed (Figure 8). Pachita Crespi’s *Manuelito*, however, depicts one single figure within a minimal interior setting (Figure 9). The boy in her painting is less blocky and exhibits a greater degree of naturalism. Three of Crespi’s paintings hung in Macy’s show, ranging in price from $139-$198, with *Manuelito* being sold for the highest price. An article in *Art Digest* from this time described Crespi as the granddaughter of Dr. Jose Maria Castro, three times President of Costa Rica. The *Art Digest* author further stated that her work possessed a combination of “native whimsy and Nordic wit.” This quote reflects the tendency of art writers from this period to use terminology that both creates and reinforces stereotypes about Latin American art.

Maria Martins was one of the most frequently mentioned Latin American artists in art journals from the 1940s. She was an accomplished Brazilian sculptor who was quite successful in the United States. In 1942, the Museum of Modern Art purchased her sculpture *Christ* and the Metropolitan her *St. Francis*. While she was well-known as an artist, the art journals were always sure to mention that her husband was the Brazilian Ambassador to the United States. This fact would likely have been of added importance to Macy’s, whose fair was already playing host to many foreign dignitaries and government officials.

Martins had three sculptures displayed at Macy’s. *St. Francis*, purchased by the Metropolitan, was being sold for $4999. Her *Samba Dancer* and *Figure* each were priced at

---

49 Macy’s (Firm). *Paintings and Sculptures from the Latin American Fair*, 1
50 Macy’s (Firm). *Paintings and Sculptures from the Latin American Fair*, 3 *Church in Costa Rica*, $179, and *Pueblo*, $139, were the two other Crespi works sold at Macy’s. It should also be noted that Macy’s titled *Manuelito* as “Manuelito Costa Rica.”
51 “New York Sees Costa Rica,” *Art Digest*, May 15, 1942: 16
52 Both *Art Digest* and *Art News* published many brief announcements about the sale and exhibition of Martin’s sculptures in the United States.
53 “Latinos in the Modern,” *Art Digest*, February 1, 1942: 18
54 “Sculptures from Brazil,” *Art Digest*, October 15, 1941: 12
$999. *Samba Dancer* was made of jacaranda, a native Brazilian wood (Figure 10).55 Martin’s *Samba Dancer* is a figurative work that art journals lauded for its use of native material.56

The United States’ obsession with showing art that reflected “native” Latin American culture is exemplified by the redundant terms that were used to describe individual artworks. Beginning in the 1920s, the United States, in shaping its own identity, began to exhibit and buy Native American works from the U.S.—selling them as cultural objects that promoted a constructed national heritage.57 The United States’ desire for all things Mexican, especially items that represented indigenous cultures, reflected the influence of the *indigenismo* movement throughout Latin America, as well as the U.S.’ increasing push to create a Pan-American identity.58

In articles from the early 1940s, the focus on “native” art, even when it was modern, is apparent. Latin American art was usually described as possessing some quality that represented its “native” culture. “Native flavor” and “national rhythm and swing” are just two examples of the reductive way in which movements, such as social realism, were distilled into misconceived generalizations.59 Instead of examining the specific social, political, economic, and artistic influences that shaped the work from each country, Latin American art was molded in to a single entity that was nationalistic, had “rhythm,” and was being shown in the United States as a gesture of “Good Will.”60

All of the works that I have discussed are figurative and seem to incorporate sociopolitical or regional themes. They also exhibit some degree of abstraction. These

---

55 Macy’s (Firm). *Paintings and Sculptures from the Latin American Fair*, 8.
56 “Sculptures from Brazil,” *Art Digest*, October 15, 1941, 12.
58 Barnett-Sanchez, 4.
60 Nancy Jackson Seiberling, *Art Digest*, “Chilean Art featured at Toledo in Good Will Exhibition,” 15. This citation is merely one example of a “Good Will” exhibition from 1942.
characteristics were dominant in Latin American art until the 1930s and, in some countries, the 1940s. All of the pieces that I have discussed were, indeed executed between the 1920s and early-1930s, although some examples are undated. After the 1930s, art in the United States, and in many Latin American nations, underwent many stylistic and thematic changes, due in part to the influx of European, avant-garde influence. Judging from this small selection of works, it would seem as though the show, as decided by the nations and Macy's, chose to exhibit work that was more nationalistic, ignoring the works that would have conveyed an international aesthetic.

As demonstrated in Macy's Latin American Fair, aesthetics are essential in the construction of national symbols. Art was used to negotiate cross-cultural relationships. The non-utilitarian function of paintings and sculptures make them signifiers of cultural status. As nearly all the works in Macy's were for sale, the art overtly played the role of commodity—a good that was being bartered for the well-being of the world.

The consequence of promoting art as cultural product, as a symbol of another nation, is that the exchange inevitably endorses a sense of otherness. Macy's fair did not really show how Mexico, South and Central Americans lived, but created a parody of their culture. The fair endorsed an aesthetic that promoted the Latin American as "exotic" and in some cases "primitive." These terms are language of power. They offered middle-class viewers from the United States a sense of privileged empowerment over Latin Americans. The continued and prolific use of these patronizing terms in relation to art exhibitions from Latin American countries is perpetuated by the lumping together of many nations into one. These stereotypes

---


and generalizations can only be diffused by education and specificity. The rhetoric attached to
Latin American exhibitions has created an environment that devalues the works by making them
emblems of a nation’s collective identity, rather than of individual talent.

While the fair was meant to persuade Latin American officials of the United State’s
generosity, the event was also clearly designed for New York City’s consumers. Macy’s
department store offered a popular parallel to the conference that was simultaneously being held
in Rio de Janeiro; the fair was a spectacle that might have alleviated some of the national focus
on tensions abroad. At the same time, Macy’s surely recognized the financial threat that war
posed for them and sought new non-European markets. The success of Macy’s commercial
venture would, in large part, depend on its shoppers. Thus, the fair’s design was meant to
advertise Latin American products by selling consumers an exotic aesthetic. Inca orange and the
Temple of Jewels helped shape an environment in which people could replace their own
preconceptions of Latin American culture with Macy’s re-invention of the Southern Hemisphere.
Figure 1: "Display Ad 13—No Title" (New York Times, January 16, 1942, 7).
Figure 2: Photograph of Mrs. Roosevelt cutting the tape at preview ceremonies on January 16, 1942. Jack I. Straus, president of Macy’s stands to her left (New York Times, January 17, 1942, 30).
Figure 3: Candido Portinari, *Morro*, 114 x 146 cm., oil on canvas, 1933, Museum of Modern Art, New York City. (Fabris 1996, 40).
Figure 4: Illustration of Macy's Gateway to the Fair, modeled after the entrance to Ranch San Jose, located outside of Mexico City (Macy's Latin American Fair, 8).
Figure 5: “Sales Girls in Mexican Costumes Outside the Temple of Jewels” (Christian Science Monitor, January 19, 1942, 3).
Figure 6: “Pottery and Glassware Section at Latin American Fair,”
(Christian Science Monitor Jan. 19, 1942, 3).
Figure 7: Lino Spilimbergo. *Arrabal de Buenos Aires*, 100 x 124 cm., oil on canvas, 1933 (Whitelow 1999, 103).
Figure 9: Pachita Crespi, Manuelito, (Art Digest, May 15, 1942, 16).
Bibliography


“Sculpture from Brazil.” *Art Digest* (October 15, 1941): 12.


“See South America.” *Art Digest* (October 1, 1941): 23.


