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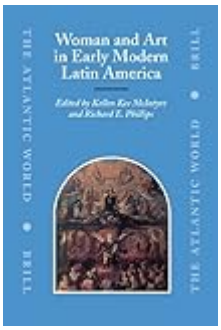

Kellen Kee McIntyre, Richard E. Phillips, eds. *Woman and Art in Early Modern Latin America.* Leiden: Brill, 2007. xviii + 449 pp. $129.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-90-04-15392-9.

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Woman Represented

The study of art created in the centuries following the Iberian conquest of Mesoamerica and South America is enjoying a moment of fruitful reconnaissance. The last five years have seen the production of a number of museum exhibitions, along with catalogues, a scholarly Web site, the first textbook (with another on the way), and a growing number of academic publications dedicated to colonial Latin American art.[1] It is into this picture that we welcome the anthology under review. Following the editors' conference panel on "Constructions of Femininity in Viceregal Latin American Art and Architecture" (College Art Association, 1999) and a 2003 call for papers dealing with "any aspect of the topic, including treatments of the female impact on or presence in art, architecture, urbanization, patronage, symbolism, or iconography," the volume brings together seventeen scholarly essays plus an introductory chapter by both established and emerging scholars whose work probes the intersection of gender and visual expression in the culturally complex wake of the conquest. While the early sixteenth century provides one temporal boundary, the volume reaches beyond the colonial to include two chapters dealing with art of the nineteenth century and another that begins with material from the early twentieth century. Still with a clear emphasis on the formative colonial period, this book is meant to remedy a lacuna in the application of feminist interests to the art and architecture of early modern Latin America.

In her introduction, Kellen Kee McIntyre further frames the anthology in terms of its feminist agenda. Citing the strategies originally laid out in a seminal text by art historian Griselda Pollock in the late 1980s, McIntyre describes how the five "interventions" that have been used to investigate women's participation and representation in Western art history have been unevenly applied to the case of early modern Latin America.[2] The editor explores some challenges to the application of feminist methodologies in "the identification of women artists and patrons, their inclusion in standard art historical texts, and their limited or denied access to training," including the paucity of archival evidence in this context and the reluctance of scholars to use critical theory in the analysis of non-Western, noncontemporary traditions (p. 2). Where scholars have been more successful is in examinations of the visual representations of female identity–

both secular and religious–which, the editors of this volume argue, contributed to a mostly male constructed, gendered grammar designed to send various messages about women and their social positions in early modern Latin America. To extend this argument, the book's contents are literally shaped by the notion that the New World territories were conceived of by their Spanish invaders, artists, and others–all typically male–as a female body that could be manipulated in one way or another. In a refreshingly dynamic organization, the essays are organized not by a strict linear chronology but rather by four sections that suggest the progressively intractable relationship between the (feminized) land and its inhabitants over time.

In a format that nicely suggests the uneven push and pull of the period, the individual essays in each section jump back and forth between distinct historical moments, various visual forms, and different geographic spaces. But the range is not quite as diverse as it may sound, since the chapters overwhelmingly focus on Mexican traditions, colonial contexts, and representations of women–rather than their participation in the art world. Some essays which stand out are those that break with the anthology's trends, like the contribution from A. Lepage, which not only takes the reader to Quito, but also meditates on the real and imagined history of an eighteenth-century painter who began in her father's workshop. This story of Isabel de Cisneros, unfortunately, also reminds us of how much unraveling of myth is required to uncover the details of a woman artist's place in the colonial Latin American art world–and even then, that picture remains obscured by patriarchal strictures of social reality. These serious challenges to women's histories are also highlighted in the essay by Maria Elena Bernal-GarcÃa, who critiques a set of twentieth-century analyses of female figurines from pre-contact Tlatilco, Mexico. The inclusion of Bernal-GarcÃa's work underscores the centrality of gender issues across the often confining categories of "pre-Columbian," "colonial," and "modern" Latin American art history, while demonstrating just how distorting–and ongoing–male biases in history have been.

Elizabeth Perry's chapter on the arts in Mexico's late colonial convents offers what feels like a rare and rich glimpse of a world that is more clearly defined by women–specifically that of creole nuns who themselves were often significant patrons, practitioners, and portrait sitters. The clear connection that Perry develops between these gendered art trends, social history, and Bourbon politics might make this a useful reading in the college classroom. Lori Boornazian Diel's work may also be helpful in this context, as it convincingly highlights the influence of Catholic morality on representation of women by indigenous artists in sixteenth-century central Mexico. This chapter further promotes the notion that the construction of the gendered grammar identified by McIntyre in her introduction is founded on the specific imposition of new religious values on Latin America's landscape. On the other end of the book's chronological purview, Magali Carrera's chapter creatively paints an effective case study of how the female body was used in nineteenth-century images to inspire a nascent nationalism in newly sovereign Mexico.

One critical theme that might have received more general contemplation in the volume is that of the complex overlaps of oppressions of which gender was but a single thread. Just a few chapters tap into this promising subject, including that of Carolyn Dean, who, through the compelling juxtaposition of an eighteenth-century painting of an allegorized America giving her breast milk to Spanish youths and the social realities that surrounded it, reveals the double discrimination inflicted on Andean women who were forced by men and economics to surrender their gender to wet-nurse the infants of wealthy Spaniards. Like the rest of the native population, these women reaped few rewards of the colonial enterprise in Peru. Although very different in method, Ray HernÃ¡ndez-DurÃ¡n's contribution also probes the interrelationship among race, gender, and power. Exploring multiple readings embedded in an eighteenth-century painted embrace between Moctezuma and HernÃ¡n CortÃ©s, HernÃ¡ndez-DurÃ¡n more directly argues for the value of using contemporary theory to explore the ways in which any number of aspects of identity–including gender, race, and class (to which we can add religion, age, sexuality, and locality)–are frequently contingent on one another. This approach has clear application in any colonial context, and it would have been beneficial to see this idea foregrounded in the volume's introduction. This way, the book would be situated more clearly within recent discussions in gender studies and of interest to other critical theorists concerned with the complex dynamics of power, manipulations of the body, and interrelated social patterns shifting over time, in any place.

The volume lacks a concluding assessment of recurrent themes and principal findings presented across the chapters and set against the larger context of Latin American art and history, identifying especially the implications of those dominant ideas. That would have been a

daunting task given the broad dimensions of the book, but remains a worthwhile effort that has been done for other similar volumes in related fields.[3] McIntyre notes that this book is not intended as a definitive text, and, indeed, the emergent nature of the field would make such a final word premature. But, as an initial step, it would be useful to see a more rigorous teasing out of some of the tangled threads of that gendered discourse for which the editors argue, even if the picture most likely to emerge is a fluid and ambiguous one. Finally, since early modern Latin American art history is currently experiencing such public exploration, this volume should have made space for the identification of its contributors, their affiliations, and their areas of scholarship. While several scholars are well established in their research and institutions, many others are not. In the age of Google, this is a surmountable challenge for someone seeking information about or from any of the contributors, but this remains a regrettable omission.

None of these observations preclude the fact that this volume constitutes a valuable addition to the growing literature on early modern Latin American art history. Furthermore, because women–both in history and in representation–are examined here primarily within the colonial context, this anthology will also be of interest to scholars concerned with the effects of transatlantic contact, be it Spanish, Portuguese, British, or French, on the construction of social roles in the process of cultural exchange. The book especially invites comparisons with formative ideas about femininity, and its partner, masculinity, in the context of Anglo-America and the Caribbean. Gender remains an especially promising category of historical analysis in the Atlantic world and beyond.

Notes

[1]. Recent museum catalogues include Joseph J. Richel, *The Arts in Latin America, 1492-1820* (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 2006); and Donna Pierce, Rogelio Gomar, and Clara Bargellini, *Painting a New World: Mexican Art and Life, 1521-1821* (Denver: Denver Art Museum, 2004). The Web site is credited as Dana Leibsohn and Barbara Mundy, *Vistas: Visual Culture in Spanish America, 1520-1820*, `http://www.smith.edu/vistas`, 2005.

[2]. Griselda Pollock, "Feminist Interventions in the History of Art: An Introduction," in *Vision and Difference: Femininity, Feminism and Histories of Art* (London: Routledge, 1988), 1-17.

[3]. For instance, Nora Jaffary, ed., *Gender, Race, and Religion in the Colonization of the Americas*, Women and Gender in the Early Modern World Series (Hampshire and Burlington: Ashgate, 2007); Cecelia F. Klein, ed., *Gender in Pre-Hispanic America* (Washington DC: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2001); and Marit Melhuus and Kristi Anne Stolen, eds., *Machos, Mistresses, Madonnas: Contesting the Power of Latin American Gender Imagery*, Critical Studies in Latin American and Iberian Cultures (London and New York: Verso, 1996).

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