

In the years after the Second World War, South American avant-garde groups sought to reinvent abstract art, creating scores of manifestos, journals, and exhibitions. Artists from Montevideo, Buenos Aires, Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, and Caracas built upon the legacies of European abstraction, transforming them in order to produce one of the most vibrant and radical chapters in the history of South American modernism. This exhibition traces the exchanges between its different groups and suggests points of dialogue between avant-garde artists and local, vernacular cultures. It also includes works from beyond the region with the goal of framing these processes within a broader international context.

The first part of the exhibition, “Artworks as Artifacts, Artworks as Manifestos,” gathers works that challenge the long-standing conventions of art. These pieces question the distinction between painting and sculpture, integrate movement into stationary objects, and, in some cases, push art beyond the object itself. The second part of the exhibition, “Modern as Abstract,” explores the exceptionally fluid collaborations between artists, architects, and designers who aimed to reshape the urban environment and everyday life. From the 1950s on, the language of abstraction became synonymous with modernity as well as an emblem of the region’s development.

*Sur moderno: Journeys of Abstraction* celebrates the generosity of collector and MoMA Trustee Patricia Phelps de Cisneros, who gave the Museum almost 150 works from this period. This gift enables MoMA to present a more comprehensive and pluralistic narrative of artistic practices and to demonstrate the integral role that Latin America played in the development of modern art.

Organized by Inés Katzenstein, Curator of Latin American Art and Director of the Patricia Phelps de Cisneros Research Institute for the Study of Art from Latin America, The Museum of Modern Art, and consulting curator María Amalia García, Consejo Nacional de Investigaciones Científicas y Técnicas (CONICET)–Universidad Nacional de San Martín, with Karen Grimson, Curatorial Assistant, Department of Drawings and Prints, The Museum of Modern Art.

Generous funding for the exhibition is provided by Agnes Gund.

Additional support is provided by Adriana Cisneros de Griffin and Nicholas Griffin.

Leadership contributions to the Annual Exhibition Fund, in support of the Museum’s collection and collection exhibitions, are generously provided by the Kate W. Cassidy Foundation, Sue and Edgar Wachenheim III, Mimi and Peter Haas Fund, Jerry I. Speyer and Katherine G. Farley, Eva and Glenn Dubin, The Sandra and Tony Tamer Exhibition Fund, Alice and Tom Tisch, The David Rockefeller Council, The Contemporary Arts Council, Anne Dias, Kathy and Richard S. Fuld, Jr., Kenneth C. Griffin, The Keith Haring Foundation, Marie-Josée and Henry R. Kravis, Jo Carole and Ronald S. Lauder, and Anna Marie and Robert F. Shapiro.

Major contributions to the Annual Exhibition Fund are provided by the Estate of Ralph L. Riehle, Emily Rauh Pulitzer, Brett and Daniel Sundheim, Karen and Gary Winnick, The Marella and Giovanni Agnelli Fund for Exhibitions, Clarissa Alcock and Edgar Bronfman, Jr., Agnes Gund, and Oya and Bülent Eczacıbaşı.