

Contacts: Karen Frasca
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston
617.369.3442
kfrascona@mfa.org

Marketing Department
Cisneros Fontanals Art Foundation
305.445.3343
marketing@cifo.org

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***PERMISSION TO BE GLOBAL/PRÁCTICAS GLOBALES:
LATIN AMERICAN ART FROM THE ELLA FONTANALS-CISNEROS COLLECTION***

MFA Debuts First Exhibition Dedicated to Contemporary Latin American Art



*Reja Naranja (Orange Bars), 2012, Daniel Medina
(Venezuela)*

BOSTON, MA—The Cisneros Fontanals Art Foundation (CIFO) and the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (MFA), join forces on the exhibition *Permission To Be Global/Prácticas Globales: Latin American Art from the Ella Fontanals-Cisneros Collection*, featuring contemporary works by artists from across the Americas. Drawn from the holdings of Ella Fontanals-Cisneros, founder and president of CIFO, the exhibition premiered during Art Basel Miami Beach and debuts at the MFA on March 19, 2014. Incorporating sculpture, painting, photography, video, installation and performance art from 1960 to the present, *Permission To Be Global/Prácticas Globales* features 46 artists from Central and South America and the Caribbean. Together their works explore what it means

“to be global,” when free and equal cultural exchange is still limited by the power dynamics of globalization. After years of underrepresentation at home and abroad, many of these artists are now leading the discourse about contemporary art’s reach across international borders, while still reflecting social and political issues at home. *The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, presents this exhibition in collaboration with the Cisneros Fontanals Art Foundation. At the MFA, this exhibition and related programming was made possible in part by the Institute of Museum and Library Services. Supporting sponsorship by Copa Airlines. With generous support from the Robert and Jane Burke Fund for Exhibitions and the Leigh and Stephen Braude Fund for Latin American Art.*

This is the MFA’s first-ever exhibition dedicated to contemporary Latin American art, showcasing many artists never before seen in New England. The exhibition features works from the Ella Fontanals-Cisneros Collection along with new performances by artists

who are featured in her collection. *Permission to be Global/Prácticas Globales* is curated by the MFA's Jen Mergel, Robert L. Beal, Enid L. Beal and Bruce A. Beal Senior Curator of Contemporary Art and Liz Munsell, Assistant Curator of Contemporary Art & MFA Programs, in consultation with Jesús Fuenmayor, Director and Chief Curator of CIFO. Featuring 60 works, the exhibition is on view in the Henry and Lois Foster Gallery at the MFA from March 19 through July 13, 2014.

"The MFA is grateful to Ella Fontanals-Cisneros for sharing works from her renowned collection with our audiences—she is an extraordinary woman whose foundation has been connecting audiences in the US and Europe with seminal art from across Latin America for over a decade," said Malcolm Rogers, Ann and Graham Gund Director of the MFA. "This is an exciting moment, as increased attention to international contemporary art inspires artists and scholars. We hope that this collaboration will further the MFA's efforts to represent the diverse influences of art from across all of the Americas."

Permission To Be Global/Prácticas Globales focuses not only on the creation of art from Latin America, but also on its reception, locally and internationally. "Since its founding over ten years ago, CIFO has showcased Latin American art with its yearly exhibitions, promoting and representing artists from this region," said Ella Fontanals-Cisneros, founder and president of CIFO. "We are excited to be collaborating with the MFA on this year's exhibition and to present these works in Boston, bringing Latin American art to a new broader audience." The exhibition aims to open dialogue about where, when and why Latin American art has garnered attention—a key mission of CIFO.



Productivismo (Productivism), 1992, Artista Melodramático—Rene Francisco Rodríguez, Eduardo Ponjuán González (Cuba)



Untitled (Globe of the World), 2002, Wilfredo Prieto (Cuba)

In the second half of the 20th century, many Latin American artists' work addressed social causes in climates of great hostility and repression by military governments that swept the region. During the Cold War, both the US and USSR vied for their economic and political interests in Latin America. The ensuing decades saw the extreme acceleration of globalization, with contemporary artists—including those from across Latin America—creating a new brand of art that reacted to shifting international power dynamics and exposed issues that had previously not been represented on an international stage.

The backdrop of political repression sets the tone in **León Ferrari's** sculpture *La Jaula (The Cage)* (1979), which he created while in exile from an oppressive regime in his native Argentina. He imagined earlier cage works as a metaphorical prison cell for the military officers who tortured and executed thousands, including his son, during Argentina's "Dirty War" in the 1970s. Ferrari's use of abstraction to speak to political issues has been extremely influential for upcoming generations of artists. Emerging Cuban artist **Wilfredo Prieto** parodies the "smallness" of the global world in *Untitled*

(*Globe of the World*) (2002), which inks all seven continents onto a tiny dried pea—a gesture that reduces the massive idea of globalism onto a food many Cubans have grown tired of. In her sculpture *Dialogue with Him* (1998), Argentinean born, New York-based artist **Liliana Porter** displays a figurine of Mickey Mouse with one of José Gregorio Hernández, the legendary Venezuelan doctor memorialized across his homeland in public monuments and mementos for his saintly healing powers. The faceoff between both figurines suggests a dialogue between different value and belief systems that coexist in a globalized world.



Dialogue with him, 1989, Liliana Porter (Argentina)



Untitled, 1975, Ana Mendieta (Cuba)

As many artists became part of the larger global network, they were no longer able to identify with their culture alone—this left many asking what it means to be a "Latin American artist." Brazilian art legend **Nelson Leirner** illustrates this idea through his work *Untitled* (from the series *Assim é... se lhe parece...* (*Right You Are if You Think You Are*)) (2003). Leirner uses cartoons to interrogate the relationship between North and South America by pairing two maps of the continents collaged with stickers of Mickey and Minnie Mouse and dancing skeletons from Day of the Dead (a traditional Mexican holiday). The accumulation of skeletons might evoke those lost to natural and unnatural causes in Latin America, while the grinning characters of Disney threaten an impending homogenous culture. Cuban-born artist **Ana Mendieta's** self-portrait *Untitled* (1975), morphs her own body into an abstraction of a childhood memory. The work is based on a photo of Mendieta as a child wearing a butterfly costume, taken before her 1961 departure from Cuba as part of the Peter Pan Operation, which brought Cuban children to live in the US, separated from their parents, following the Cuban Revolution. Mendieta's vanguard video footage revisits her severed roots in Cuba through brightly colored organic geometric forms.

The exhibition is organized into four sections: "Power Parodied," "Borders Redefined," "Occupied Geometries" and "Absence Accumulated." Through these themes, the exhibition considers artists' distinct strategies for communication in both their local political contexts and in the international art context. Their unique visual languages undermine the status quo, defy boundaries,

humanize art's abstractions and revisit forgotten histories. Together, they offer an alternative understanding of what it means "to be global" today.

"This exhibition is a historic first for my hometown of Boston. Growing up here, I never had the opportunity to see contemporary art from across Latin America," said Jen Mergel, the MFA's Robert L. Beal, Enid L. Beal and Bruce A. Beal Senior Curator of Contemporary Art. "Now, thanks to our partnership with Ella Fontanals-Cisneros and CIFO, we are proud to present a remarkable selection of art, organized to teach us about our globalized world, global ideals and the artistic visions than can make our world smaller, and bigger, at the same time."

Permission To Be Global/Prácticas Globales is also the Museum's first exhibition to incorporate works of performance art. On opening night, Cuban artist **Lázaro Saavedra** intends to realize a performance that was prohibited by cultural authorities in Cuba in 1990. He will lie in a casket in the gallery—paying sarcastic homage to the "death of the author" (i.e., himself). Also part of the exhibition is a performance by **Regina José Galindo**—one of Latin America's premiere performance artists (details and date to be confirmed).

"Many of the works in *Permission To Be Global/Prácticas Globales* use visual languages to address social and political issues in Latin American history, as well as topics of pressing concern today, like immigration reform in the US," said Liz Munsell, Assistant Curator of Contemporary Art & MFA Programs. "Having lived and been educated in Latin America, I hope this exhibition expresses some of the communicative strategies of artists from the region, filling in gaps in knowledge for those unfamiliar with this material and its societal contexts."



Structuralist Study of Poverty (DETAIL), 2002,
Sergio Vega (Argentina)

Power Parodied explores how artists call attention to unjust social realities through exaggerations of scale, extreme repetition, ironic references to the status quo and outlandish ideas for escaping social ills. In Argentinean **Sergio Vega's** piece *Structuralist Study of Poverty* (2002), Vega puts a plastic potato, onion and garlic bulb atop tiny model-size shacks on pedestals of varied heights to evoke economic bar graphs that measure poverty levels. Figurines of newscasters and cameramen seem to report on the large weight of the agricultural foods, an industry many might try to escape for jobs in service industries in urban centers. Also in this section, Costa Rican **Priscilla Monge** suggests the forced repetition of a lesson—and the threat of institutionally mandated detentions—in her chalkboard drawing *No debo perder la cordura (I Should Not Lose my Sanity)* (1999).

Borders Redefined investigates how artists use frames, surface and physical borders—like the bars of a fence or jail—to highlight ways of disrupting divides and categories. Venezuelan artist **Daniel Medina's** *Reja Naranja (Orange Bars)* from the series *Dispositivo Cinético/Social (Kinetic/Social Device)* (2012), echoes linear abstractions by generations of Venezuelan artists, but also features a security gate, hinged to the gallery wall, signaling an exclusive barrier to private property. **Mathias Goeritz** disrupted the metal surfaces of his sculptures by driving nails through them, as seen in *Mensaje: Decoración Mural (Message: Wall Decoration)* (1970). As an architect and visual artist, born in Europe and based in Mexico, Goeritz believed that constructed spaces should elicit a response from the bodies that experience them.



O Tempo Oco (The Empty Time), 2004, Ernesto Neto Medina (Brazil)

Occupied Geometries illustrates how artists resist passive forms of spectatorship with imagery of active bodies in public space, or with objects that prompt audience participation. Brazilian artist **Ernesto Neto's** installation *O Tempo Oco (The Empty Time)* (2004) features soft organic geometries of flesh-colored fabric reminiscent of weighty body parts, inviting viewers to slow down among the limbs with a suspended sense of time. In **Magdalena Fernández's** animated video *1pm006'Ararauna' (1pm006 'Macaw')* from the series *Pinturas móviles (Mobile Paintings)* (2006), viewers see the stretch and strain of colored rectangles as the voice of a blue-and-yellow macaw squawks—a common ambient sound in her native Venezuela.

Absence Accumulated demonstrates how many Latin American artists have refused to let history be erased. Through the accumulation of material and the layering of ideas, they draw attention to events beyond the narrow focus of officially sanctioned history. In Argentinean **Horacio Zabala's** *Revisar/Censurar (Revise/Censor)* (1974), countless stamps, like those of state bureaucrats, blackout a map of South America, suggesting how history is revised when countless facts are redacted. **Eugenio Dittborn** of Chile disseminates images and notes on historical events as coded messages about news in his country. In *Neo Transand Airmail Painting No. 41* (1985), he combines poetry, military photography and a drawing of an indigenous boy sacrificed in ancient times as a metaphor for young lives lost to Augusto Pinochet's dictatorship. In his table top projection, *Sedimentaciones (Sedimentations)* (2011), Colombian artist **Oscar Muñoz** demonstrates how images shape history, as



Sedimentaciones (Sedimentations), 2011, Oscar Muñoz (Colombia)

photographs of world events and figures are developed by a set of ghostly hands. He addresses how personal or collective memory contrasts with overriding narratives from mass media or “official” national history. **Regina José Galindo** commemorates victims of Guatemala’s civil war (1960-1996) in her 2003 performance and video, *¿Quién puede borrar las huellas? (Who Can Erase the Traces?)*. By dipping her bare feet in a basin of human blood and walking from Guatemala City’s constitutional court to the National Palace, she imprinted a visceral symbol of mass violence onto her capitol, and the internationally distributed video footage raised global awareness of the country’s nearly forgotten history.

Publication

Permission to be Global/Prácticas Globales: Latin American Art from the Ella Fontanals-Cisneros Collection is accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue, published by CIFO, with entries on all featured works and an introductory conversation by exhibition curators Jen Mergel and Liz Munsell in consultation with Jesús Fuenmayor. The catalogue reflects their different perspectives—each was born in a different decade and was educated in a different country in the Americas.

Ella Fontanals-Cisneros

Ella Fontanals-Cisneros is a philanthropist, entrepreneur and art collector whose vision has made a lasting impact on the Miami arts community and global arts organizations. Born in Cuba and raised in Venezuela, Fontanals-Cisneros began collecting works by artists from Latin America in 1970, and has grown her collection over the years to include video, photography, geometric abstraction and contemporary art by artists from around the world. Fontanals-Cisneros has lent pieces from her collection to institutions worldwide, including the Tate Modern (London) and the Reina Sofia Museum (Madrid). In 2002, She founded the Cisneros Fontanals Art Foundation (CIFO) to foster a better understanding and appreciation of contemporary artists from Latin America.

CIFO

The Cisneros Fontanals Art Foundation (CIFO) is a non-profit organization established in 2002 by Ella Fontanals-Cisneros and her family to support artists who are exploring new directions in contemporary art. CIFO fosters cultural understanding and educational exchange through three primary initiatives: a Grants and Commissions Program for emerging and mid-career visual artists from Latin America; an exhibitions program showcasing work by Latin American artists and international contemporary art from the Ella Fontanals-Cisneros Collection at the CIFO Art Space; and foundation-initiated support for other arts and culture projects. For more information, visit cifo.org, email info@cifo.org or call 305.415.6343. The CIFO Art Space is located at 1018 North Miami Avenue, Miami, FL 33136.

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MFA, Boston

The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (MFA), is recognized for the quality and scope of its encyclopedic collection, which includes an estimated 450,000 objects. The Museum’s collection is made up of: Art of the Americas; Art of Europe; Contemporary Art; Art of Asia, Oceania, and Africa; Art of the Ancient World; Prints, Drawings, and Photographs; Textile and Fashion Arts; and Musical Instruments. The School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (SMFA), is a division of the MFA offering undergraduate and graduate degree programs. Open seven days a

week, the MFA's hours are Saturday through Tuesday, 10 a.m.–4:45 p.m.; and Wednesday through Friday, 10 a.m.–9:45 p.m. Admission (which includes one repeat visit within 10 days) is \$25 for adults and \$23 for seniors and students age 18 and older, and includes entry to all galleries and special exhibitions, including Permission To Be Global/Prácticas Globales. Admission is free for University Members and children age 17 and younger on weekdays after 3 p.m., weekends, and Boston Public Schools holidays; otherwise \$10. Wednesday nights after 4 p.m. admission is by voluntary contribution (suggested donation \$25). MFA Members are always admitted for free. The Museum's mobile MFA Guide is available at ticket desks and Sharf Visitor Center for \$5, members; \$6, non-members; and \$4, youths. The Museum is closed on New Year's Day, Patriots' Day, Independence Day, Thanksgiving, and Christmas. For more information, visit mfa.org or call 617.267.9300. The MFA is located on the Avenue of the Arts at 465 Huntington Avenue, Boston, MA 02115.

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