

CHAPTER 14

The Quest for Modernity

A Global/National Approach to a History of Design in Latin America

PATRICIA LARA-BETANCOURT

Design history studies in Latin America, strictly speaking, are just emerging, partly in response to the global reach that the discipline has experienced in recent years.¹ This chapter asks what kind of design history seems relevant for the region in an age of globalization, and argues for a complementary approach where both the national and the global, in their interaction, are equally relevant. In historical discourse, and for over a hundred years, the nation has been the favoured unit of analysis. This methodological nationalism has been criticized for its tendency to think of the nation as autonomous and self-determining, lessening the significance and role of global factors in shaping history (Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002). What I propose here is an example of altering the framework and discourse to consider how the global relates to the national, generating perhaps a richer way of analysing design's relationship with history and society in Latin America. A shift in focus from the 'only national' to the 'global and national' involves exploring the effect of assimilation and appropriation within the context of sophisticated networks of trade, world exploration and cultural sovereignty, which by necessity transform local cultures, arts and traditions. Drawing from published work and from my current and past research on the history of design and decorative arts in Latin America, I will refer initially to the debate about the role of the nation state in a globalized world and its methodological implications for a Latin American context. I will be proposing a dual global and national focus to the discussion of two examples – one from the nineteenth and the other from the second half of the twentieth century – exemplifying different approaches to design history,

interpreted as quests for modernity and identity. Such a focus, in attending to the interplay between global forces and national dynamics, highlights the way in which both shape, influence and respond to each other.

Forms of Exchange: The Dynamics of Globalization and the Nation State

As part of a globalized world, more than ever design is being affected by far-reaching changes in technology, communication and markets. As globalization accelerates, and in spite of its obvious benefits, there are increasing complaints about the spread of a homogenous material and visual culture throughout the world (Holton 2011: 189–202; Fiss 2009: 3). Shopping malls and international airports are often cited as examples of this tendency that turns cities, buildings and interiors into the same undifferentiated environments everywhere. However, given the enormous differences across the world in terms of geography, language, religion, cultural ways and traditions, it is still a matter of debate whether a global economy necessarily imposes a homogeneous culture (Holton 2011: 202–215). The same type of designed commodities, environments, information and advertising may be spreading everywhere, but there is also no denying the richly diverse ways in which different societies experience and consume them, not to mention the different meanings that people ascribe to them. The notion of hybridity is relevant here, with its focus on understanding how cultural exchanges take place and how cultures interact to produce something new. This approach suggests that globalization, in forging new hybrid paths, brings into question homogenizing and Westernizing trends (Pieterse 1995: 69–90), attending both to the global and national, and resulting in new articulations of the social and the cultural. With Latin America as a case study, and within a context of multi-cultural awareness, a number of Latin American scholars have analysed the way in which individuals interact with commercially driven media, highlighting their human agency and creative potential in receiving, manipulating, and sometimes subverting, the highly commodified products and messages in everyday life (García Canclini 2001: 10; Martín-Barbero 2000; García Canclini 1999).²

A common but different argument against the homogenizing tendency of a globalized economy is that even if global industries, goods, products and services keep extending their reach, this does not translate into equal access for all regions and all sectors of society. There are large inequalities in the redistribution of wealth in the world and within countries. With 100% meaning maximum inequality, the Gini index figures for Latin America fluctuate between 45% and 59% (Colombia has 58.5%, Chile 52.1%, Brazil 51.9%, Mexico 48.3% and Argentina 45.8%) (CIA The World Factbook [2009–2014]; Gini Index at <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/fields/2172>).

html).³ What this argument illustrates is that social and economic differences still act as considerable counterbalances to homogenizing tendencies of multinational capitalism and that a significant part of consumption still remains determined by local political powers and policies of redistribution.

The Global/National Framework

As a historical process, globalization predates the emergence of nation states, with the connections between the birth of nation states and industrialization being evident since around 1750. Historians have pointed out that it was only within the context of an industrial society that nationalism could develop; showing how only the systems and infrastructures of industrialized societies could sustain the growth of nation states and nationalism (Hobsbawm 1990; Gellner 1983; Anderson 1991). It is interesting to note that the growth of nationalism in the nineteenth century was an international process, with nations emerging at the same time on both sides of the Atlantic, in Europe and in the Americas, and with the colonies seeking independence as European monarchies weakened, eventually coming to an end as ruling powers. With a history approaching two hundred years, the Latin American nation states have kept changing, responding and adapting to the dynamic interaction with global forces and in so doing have so far survived.

For some years now a global trend in design history has been unfolding, which has provided an opportunity to revise and revisit disciplinary questions. Even though this perspective implies bringing all regions in the world into the purview of the discipline, it is much more than a revision of geographic boundaries defining the field. The aspiration to globalize the discipline involves questioning the long-held assumption that the West (Europe and the USA) has had a leading role in history. The period between 1850 and 1950 could be seen as a co-production between Western and non-Western cultures rather than as a unilateral process driven by the West alone (Bayly 2004). Sociologist Robert Holton has pointed out that the 'historical contribution of non-European regions to the history of globalization has been marginalized', but more revealing perhaps is the 'presumption that the non-Western world can only participate in the global by assimilating 'Western' practices, many of which actually originated outside the West' (Holton 2011: 45). The notions of 'West' and 'Europe' have also come under scrutiny, with their status as monolithic, unchanging realities being questioned (Turner 2007). In moving away from a hierarchical and Western narrative, the non-Western element disappears as 'other' and the field of inquiry opens up to alternative, multiple and decentred perspectives. Going beyond colonial and postcolonial perspectives, a global/national approach allows for a dialogue between multiple locations with a focus on cultural mobility (of goods, artefacts, people and cultural practices)

and on the increased understanding of how transregional and transnational exchanges operate.

It becomes clear then that it would be limiting to discuss the historical development of Latin American design and material culture without a global/national interrelated approach. Made of twenty countries stretching from Mexico to Chile and a population nearing 600 million, the region represents a huge and growing market. In 2009 most Latin American countries had a higher per capita GDP than that of China, showing the growing economic importance of the area and particularly of nations such as Brazil, Argentina, Chile and Mexico. Latin American modern history started with the geographical and commercial expansion of European powers in the sixteenth century when, in becoming part of colonial empires, the Americas were placed in contact with the rest of the world. The new European inhabitants brought along not only a different genetic pool, but also different modes of government, economic systems, social organization, language, religion and artistic legacies. Indigenous Americans experienced this foreign invasion as the end of their world. However, and in spite of continuous miscegenation, some aspects of indigenous cultures managed to survive, including ancient arts, crafts and design practices. From the seventeenth century European traders forced the migration of Africans to the Americas as slave labour, adding to the already complex human and cultural melding of the Hispanic, Portuguese and ethnic diversity of indigenous groups.

With the end of colonial rule in the early nineteenth century (excepting Cuba, Puerto Rico and Brazil), Latin America was born as a group of newly independent republican nations eager to start their gradual integration into the global industrial economy. This shift determined not only the type of national economies that were to emerge later in the century, gearing efforts towards the production of raw materials required by European nations, but also the material culture the region was to adapt, adopt and develop from then on, embracing industrial technology in the shape of European imports. Without this economic integration the new but fragile nations would not have been able to protect their sovereignty and remain as viable independent states.

The Quest to Modernize

The discipline of design history has mainly reflected the output of industrialized nations. Given that most countries in Latin America still do not have a fully industrialized economy, and that design historical studies are still emerging, the role played by the region in terms of design and manufacture has been under-researched and is largely unknown. The subject is only taught as a component of design training, and although there have been well-established university design education programmes since the 1960s, there are no self-contained courses in design history in higher education.

Considering the effects of economic globalization, the power of global corporations and global financial institutions is undeniable. Nevertheless, this power is not absolute in that, in order to operate, corporations and institutions need the collaboration and assistance of local governments. In Latin America it has been mainly during periods of protectionist policies – when governments have acted against the free-market rule – that industrialization efforts and industrial design have developed. One such period is discussed in a recent publication which is, so far, the only comprehensive account of design history for the region.⁴ *Historia del Diseño en América Latina y el Caribe* (2008), edited by Gui Bonsiepe and Silvia Fernandez, is a multi-authored volume focusing on the development of industrial and communication design in the past fifty years. It is written mostly by educators and practitioners working in Latin America, rather than by scholars trained as design historians. Considering socio-economic and socio-political processes, the chapters take into account shifts in political orientation, waves of immigration, surges of capital investment, and conditions dictated by the global financial institutions. As the authors reveal, it was not until the protectionist policy known as ISI, ‘Import-Substitution Industrialization’, became prevalent in the 1960s and 1970s, that most Latin American countries were committed to state-driven industrial development. The authors discuss the effects of implementation of the ISI agenda, whose aim was to produce locally those products that had traditionally been imported, drawn partly in response to the demands from the macro-economy and international financial agencies. The result was accelerated industrialization at first, but in the midterm (especially in the 1980s), there were negative economic consequences for the region as a whole. Latin America went through a debt and financial crisis when the amount of foreign debt surpassed the countries’ earning power and most were forced to default on repayments. On social grounds the disappointment was even bigger as people had hoped that once industrialization was implemented change in the social order would follow, but that was not the case. The process showed, however, that the significant development of design in the 1960s and 1970s relied on the public sector as the driving force, with the Ministries of Economy, Industry and Commerce establishing institutions, setting up cultural and educational programmes, and, with the crucial input of design, striving to make the economic sector an autonomous one. So far, in most cases this type of initiatives has not lasted long enough to permit nascent industries to grow sufficiently strong to compete successfully in the world market.

The Quest for Identity

If we move away from a focus on industrialization and consider instead the nineteenth century, a different kind of design history emerges, one that refers to the wider process of modernity including the impact that British industrialization

had on global commerce and the emergence of Latin American export economies. This approach considers overall the unprecedented level of consumption of European imports and technology that took place in the second half of the century (Bauer 2001; Orlove and Bauer 1997; Lara-Betancourt 1997 and 1998). The picture grows more complex, adding layers of cultural issues such as what these goods represented, and in connection with them the emergence of national and class identities. Adopting simultaneously a national and global framework I examine the cultural narratives underpinning this history while focusing on how the region as a whole embraced, adopted and adapted the diverse manifestations of global modernity represented in its material culture. I move away from the traditional opposition between global supremacy and local appropriation to pay attention to the complex interplay between them.

Design and decorative arts in nineteenth-century Latin America were, as in the colonial past, a powerful medium through which to convey political and cultural ideas, values and attitudes. With independence from colonial rule, this role became crucial in defining the nascent nations and disseminating a rich republican symbolism. The material culture of the countries, cities and the homes of the elite and middle classes was radically transformed through the century, spurred by a strong desire in Latin Americans to become modern, to emulate industrializing nations (Britain, France, Germany and the USA) and to fashion themselves as Europeans. Integrating Latin America in the world economy and acquiring the signs of progress and modernity were believed to be essential for the economic and political survival of the new independent countries. Thus the adoption of a European material culture, patterns of consumption and social etiquette became not only the new parameters for social distinction but also an indisputable and indispensable signifier of class and national identity (Lara-Betancourt 1997 and 1998; Orlove and Bauer 1997: 1–29).⁵

With the exception of Brazil, Cuba and Puerto Rico, by 1830 all countries in Latin America had achieved independence and become republics. Brazil eventually abandoned its constitutional monarchy to embrace a republican system in 1889. The new states faced the enormous task of establishing stable political regimes and modernizing largely rural countries with hierarchical traditions, high rates of illiteracy, and economies hitherto geared to colonial interests and slave labour. Throughout the century internal conflicts, cross-border disputes and clashes between warring political groups, each vying with the other in trying to implement a democratic system, were some of the driving forces spurring social, political and cultural change. However, in the second half of the century, and underpinned by foreign investment and the consolidation of an export economy, Liberalism strengthened and warfare decreased, resulting in unprecedented economic prosperity (Bushnell and Macaulay 1994; Williamson 1992: 233–284).

From the 1820s the new republics started the long process of state and nation building, aiming to establish and expand a shared sense of identity linked

to nationhood (König 1994: 187–322). In order to awaken a feeling of national belonging, the use of visual symbols was fundamental in conveying the republican ideals. In a region where illiteracy was the norm (and continued to be widespread until the 1870s), the power of visual images was crucial. An emerging visual culture and public rituals and spectacles were necessary instruments to convey and disseminate clear ideological messages (Andermann and Schell 2000). Displayed at civic celebrations taking place throughout the century, the new symbols helped to create, even if slowly, a civic conscience. The new era also witnessed a revolution in forms of communication. Printed text and images (in paper money, newspapers, leaflets and books) gave authority to the new political ideas and helped in propagating them. The national visual discourse was important not only in publicizing modern political practices and instilling a sense of belonging to a territory; it was also a message directed at other nations in the world, particularly European states with the power to confirm the political legitimacy and sovereignty of the new republics. Although at first not all sectors of the population were represented in these national visions promoted by political elites (poor creoles and *mestizos*, indigenous groups and African descendants were excluded), the ideal of national identity and unity became more attainable in the last third of the century when the growth of export economies permitted the implementation of long-dreamt plans for urbanization and modernization.

In the aftermath of Independence governments had little money for new buildings so republican symbols were represented and disseminated mainly through the national flag and coat of arms, coins, paper money, stamps and portraits of Independence heroes depicting objects such as military uniforms, swords, medals, etc. (Bretos 2004: 147–206). The Mexican flag for example, created in 1821, depicted an Aztec legend, with an eagle sitting on a cactus while devouring a serpent. According to legend, the gods had instructed the Aztecs to build a city when they found this bird. The flag's green strip represented Independence victory, a white strip signified the purity of Catholicism, and a red strip made reference to the sacrificial blood of national heroes. The eagle in Mexico and the condor in Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru became prominent symbols of the nation, and have been represented in national coats of arms, stamps, flags, medals and in a variety of decorative objects ever since.

After Independence, in the 1820s and 1830s, the structures supporting the production of crafts and decorative arts started to be dismantled, particularly those connected to the guild system and the Catholic Church. Throughout the colonial period the Church, with its mission to promote religious dogma and visual motifs, had been the fundamental inspiration and drive for artistic and craft practices (Rishel and Stratton–Pruitt 2006). Once the republicans came into power, the Church, with its historical ties to monarchic power, was seen as part of the old order and consequently considered an enemy of progress and Liberal ideas. Thus it gradually lost its influence and eventually ceased to be the main



Figure 14.1 Jar with Lid (14"), Caballo Blanco Alfar, ca. 1890, Aguascalientes, Mexico; Giffords Collection. Photograph courtesy of Gloria Giffords.

patron of the arts. The citizens of the new republics were now more interested in modern and novel political and cultural icons, subjects and themes that spoke to them of liberal values, such as liberty, equality and sovereignty. Portraits of the new leaders dressed in impressive military uniforms and visual representations of republican allegories all provided ideological support to the nascent powers (Ades 1989: 7–22; Martin 1985). A common allegorical image of Independence

was that of a crowned Latin American indigenous woman. Besides appearing in paintings and flags, she also featured on coins and on the new national coats of arms. The woman was typically shown wearing a crown of feathers, carrying a quiver of arrows on her back, and with her feet resting on a tamed caiman. The best known representation is Pedro José Figueroa's painting (1819) showing Simón Bolívar (1783–1830), the Independence hero, as the Father of the nation embracing an American Indian, representing the Republic, as his daughter. Figueroa painted the canvas to celebrate the final victory against the Spaniards after the battle of Boyacá (Colombia) on 7 August 1819 (Ades 1989).

Republican symbols also appeared on more domestic and personal items such as chairs, mirrors and tableware and also on cufflinks, buttons, guns and holsters. Bolívar's French tableware for his 'Quinta' (the country house which he used as his refuge in Santa Fé de Bogotá, between 1820 and 1830 – today a museum) was printed with the Republican coat of arms (Museo Quinta de Bolívar, Bogotá, Colombia; <http://www.quintadebolivar.gov.co/>). In Mexico, Agustín de Iturbide (1783–1824), another Latin American revolutionary, had his lithographed effigy and the Castle of Chapultepec (site of government) printed on a set of glassware comprising a decanter, *bombonniers*, tray and cups made in coloured crystal glass from Bohemia.



Figure 14.2 Set of *bombonniers*, decanter, tray and cups with lithographed effigy of Agustín de Iturbide and the Castle of Chapultepec; cut and coloured glass; Bohemia manufacture, Czech Republic; ca. 1820; Museo Nacional de Historia, Mexico. Image authorized by the Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, CONACULTA.-INAH.-MEX.

Fuelled by the rhetoric of the French Revolution and its enormous influence on Independence movements in the Americas, in terms of style (until the 1830s), the new republican powers favoured the (so called) French Empire, mostly in its American (Federal) and English (Regency) versions (Duarte 1982; Rivas 2007). This neoclassical aesthetic, called 'Republican' in some countries, influenced furniture, furnishings, fashion and attire (Duarte 2011). Most of the miniatures painted in these years show women dressed and *coiffured* according to this neoclassical trend. The furniture at Bolívar's 'Quinta' exemplifies the style (Museo Quinta de Bolívar).

In the second half of the century, government efforts to strengthen economic and commercial links with European and North American nations to integrate into the world economy focused on participating in international exhibitions and trade fairs, which were seen as the summit of progress and modernity and epitomized the spirit of free commerce (Di Liscia and Lluch 2009; González Stephan and Andermann 2006; Elkin 1999; Tenorio-Trillo 1996). Several Latin American countries such as the Argentine Confederation, the Empire of Brazil, Uruguay, Colombia, Mexico, Costa Rica, Guatemala and the Dominican Republic contributed to the Great Exhibition of 1851 in London, and to the Paris Universal Exhibition of 1855. These events and the pavilions designed and built for the spectacular display and presentation of goods and products encapsulated the nations' identity and the image that Latin American republics wanted to communicate and promote abroad. In spite of their differences, Latin American nations used similar modern designs to convey their identities as nation states. Participating at international exhibitions represented part of a larger group of official efforts to forge a sense of national pride and identity, which included museums, monuments, pageantry, illustrated magazines and, in general, progress-related representations and imagery, all contributing to creating the spectacle of modernity.

The Brazilian pavilion at the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition of 1876 was designed by US architect Frank Furness. Built in a style of architecture described as 'Mourisco' (meaning Moorish), the front façade used translucent glass bricks in flag colour combinations of green/yellow and red/blue to represent Brazil and the USA coming together (Gross and Snyder 2005). Almost ten years later, another famous Moorish pavilion was built by Mexico at the 'New Orleans Universal Cotton Exposition and World's Fair' (December 1884 to June 1885). Designed by Ramón Ibarrola and built in iron and steel by the Keystone Bridge Company of Pittsburgh, the 'Mexican Alhambra' as it was called, was widely admired mainly due to the colourful prefabricated concrete slabs and tiles inspired by Moorish designs. Part of its attraction was that its structure was made from cast iron pieces that could be assembled and dismantled without much difficulty (Mrotek 2009). As in the case of Brazil's pavilion above, the reference was not to an indigenous exoticism, or to a Moorish influence on Mexican architecture. The theme was a response to the huge interest



Figure 14.3a The Mexican pavilion at the New Orleans Exhibition 1884–1885; New Orleans Public Library Special Collections.

in exotic cultures that Europeans and the nations under their cultural influence (such as the new republics in Latin America) expressed at the time. The design was also a direct reference to the Moorish horticulture hall of Philadelphia in 1876. After the Exhibition the kiosk was reassembled on the 'Parque Alameda Central' in Mexico City until 1910 when it was moved to the 'Alameda de Santa María la Ribera' where it stands today. Most Latin American pavilions were designed by European and North American artists and designers, who probably knew little about these countries. Overall, pavilion designs reflected the compromises between the different parties involved: the state representatives, the event organizers and the general public, whose expectations were informed by current trends in taste and fashion.

Throughout the nineteenth century, and particularly during the second half, Latin Americans, in their ambition to spur progress on, showed a marked preference for new technology and imported goods. A new sense of identity emerged in allegiance with the modern world and a rising international



Figure 14.3b The Mexican pavilion today, known as *Kiosco Morisco*, and displayed at the Alameda Santa María La Ribera, Mexico City. Photograph courtesy of Marco Velázquez.

bourgeoisie. The growing industrialization of Europe and the expansion in international trade acted as a catalyst for Latin America to integrate finally into the global economy. There was, literally, a flood of imports after 1850 when the European demand for raw materials from overseas acted as a great stimulus to national and local economies. Mexican mining and agricultural produce, Colombian and Costa Rican coffee, Argentine beef and wheat, Brazilian coffee (Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo), cotton, sugar (Recife and Fortaleza) and rubber (in the Amazon: Manaus and Belem) and Chilean copper and nitrates, were among the raw materials sustaining the export economy (Bauer 2001; Orlove and Bauer 1997; Bushnell and Macaulay 1994). Particularly in the last quarter of the century, the influx of capital was destined for the building of railroads and transport infrastructure, in an attempt to reduce transport costs. As an example, among the impressive imported buildings made in iron and to be assembled on site, were prefabricated British railway stations, public markets, theatres, bandstands, and also houses. The use of iron in architecture immediately conveyed high social status due to its foreign origin, and any building could increase its value if iron structures were added, such as verandas, balconies, stairways or railings (Gomes 1995).

New wealth allowed the elite and also the emerging middle classes to acquire enticing European and foreign luxury commodities which represented not just a yearning for modernity but also an unequivocal social marker. The design of imported goods came to reference social class and buying these goods

became a clear and effective way of drawing and communicating social differences. Rather than being based on family lineage, as had been the case in the colonial past, social distinctions were increasingly linked to wealth and material possessions as the century progressed (Arana López 2011; Lara-Betancourt 1997 and 1998; Needell 1988).

The notion of what constituted foreign goods was a flexible one. Strictly speaking, it referred mainly to imported products, but also included objects made locally that resembled in design those that came from overseas (Orlove and Bauer 1997: 12–13). And the same criteria applied to products manufactured locally using imported materials, such as British woollen cloth employed to make suits or imported material to erect buildings. The drawing room of a typical middle-class home of the period would probably display a combination of imported and locally-produced furniture and furnishings: a piano and wallpaper would likely be of European origin, but the sofa and chairs would be supplied by the local cabinet maker. With the surge of imports, in every nation there was also significant stimulus to manufactures and factories producing machine-made goods such as textiles, ceramics, tiles and furniture. The *conversadeira* (loveseat) (Fig. 14.4) is a fine example of the type of furniture being produced in Bahia, Brazil during its imperial period (a collection of them are kept at the Museo Carlos Costa Pinto, Sao Paulo, Brazil; <http://www.museucostapinto.com.br/capa.asp>). Made in jacaranda, a fashionable



Figure 14.4 does not appear in the Open Access edition due to rights restrictions.

wood for domestic furniture, this type of chair was probably commissioned by one of the traditional Bahian families who made their fortunes in the business of sugar export. Produced in European styles fashionable at the time, the range of furniture made with this type of wood was varied and included different types of tables, chests, chest of drawers, wardrobes, desks, secrétaires, sofas, beds, mirrors, dressing tables and many others (Museo Carlos Costa Pinto).

Among the wealthy, domestic architecture reached European standards with families spending on them as much as their counterparts in industrialized nations. Latin America, particularly Mexico and the southern countries (Chile, Argentina and Brazil) had an impressive (and many complained excessive) Belle Époque which lasted until the 1920s (Bauer 2001: 129–164; Needell 1988). There was a construction boom in the last third of the century when the traditional colonial patio-centred houses were replaced with two- and three-storied houses and mansions. Many of the new domestic buildings followed the Second Empire French style, all with mansards, ample staircases and surrounding garden with gates to the street. Many others still followed neoclassical inspiration expressed mostly as Beaux Arts Classicism (Arana López 2011).

Public architecture did not lag behind and throughout the region foreign architects and engineers, and native ones trained in Europe, designed and built government sites, opera houses, theatres (Fig. 14.5), department stores, parks, boulevards and modern types of construction such as railway stations. A



Figure 14.5 Exterior of Teatro Juárez in Guanajuato, Mexico, ca. 1903. California Historical Society, Collection at the University of Southern California. Libraries Special Collections, Wikimedia Commons License.

remarkable example of an opera house was the one built in Manaus (Brazil), literally in the heart of the Amazon rainforest, made possible by the profits from the rubber boom. The whole region witnessed the transformation of national capitals from small towns into modern and elegant cities with gas lighting, trams, theatres and large mansions. Such was the case of Mexico City, Lima, Rio de Janeiro, Buenos Aires, and even much smaller cities such as San José in Costa Rica. As attempts were made to emulate European cities, new avenues and neighbourhoods sprung up, elite clubs emerged and cities benefited from the modernization of urban services (transport, aqueducts and sewage systems) (Almandoz 2010; Scobie 1974). For all their differences, Latin American nations made constant and deliberate use of modern design and technology (in urban, public and domestic spheres) to achieve modernization in a postcolonial context and to create and promote a sense of national identity closely related to it.

Conclusion

The dream of becoming as modern as Europeans did not materialize fully, as there were still sectors in society and huge areas in the region completely untouched by these modernizing efforts. But in following the dream Latin America moved away from a colonial past to engage with modernity in perhaps the only way that was available given the historical circumstances. The process is thus better interpreted as one of unquestioning belief in a particular notion of progress, reflecting a deep aspiration to become part of the modern world. Although later on it came to be seen as the continuation of a history of dependence, first colonial and then postcolonial, throughout the nineteenth century the quest for modernization was appreciated as a movement towards liberation from backwardness and isolation. If we compare this approach with the mixed response given to European goods by Asian and Middle Eastern countries (Western imports, for example, were rejected in China), Latin America embraced not just foreign goods and technology but what they represented in terms of enlightenment, modernity and progress (Orlove and Bauer 1997: 28). In keeping with the global/national approach proposed here, I might add that without the definitive embrace that Latin American nations gave European imports and technology, which situated them as a significant part of the global economy, perhaps the development of European modernity would have been compromised. We could also venture that it was the close economic, commercial and cultural exchanges engaged in by both parties that suggest that the shaping of the modern world was after all not a European achievement alone but a global and transnational one. It is by focusing on this dual perspective that it becomes possible to appreciate the significance of the transnational interplay within a global stage.

Notes

1. Nevertheless, the material culture and decorative arts in the Americas for the pre-Columbian and colonial periods have been studied by archaeologists, anthropologists and art historians since the 1920s.

2. Several Latin American theorists, including the Cuban anthropologist Fernando Ortiz contributing his notion of transculturation, have used concepts such as *mestizaje* and hybridization to explain and reflect Latin American cultural realities within a context of heterogeneity, diversity and pluralism.

3. Sweden has the lowest figure at 23% (2005) being the least unequal in its distribution of income, and some African countries have the highest index, with figures over 60%. The world average sits at an estimated 39% (2007).

4. Among surveys considering specific Latin American countries are: for Venezuela, Elina Pérez Urbaneja's website article, *La Promoción del Diseño Industrial en Venezuela: El Contexto del Diseño Industrial en los Países 'Subdesarrollados'* (2001), retrieved 7 May 2014 from <http://www.analitica.com/va/arte/portafolio/8969999.asp>; for Brazil, Cardoso (2000; 2005); for Mexico, Comisarenco Mirkin (2007); and for Argentina, Blanco (2005).

5. My research on the history of the drawing room in Santafé de Bogotá in the nineteenth century explained the transformation of this emblematic domestic space as a necessary political, social and cultural strategy to attract foreign investors through the display of what were considered modern standards of civilization in the shape of furniture, furnishings, interior décor and etiquette.

References

- Ades, Dawn. 1989. *Art in Latin America: The Modern Era, 1820–1980*. London and New York: The South Bank Centre and Yale University Press.
- Almandoz, Arturo (ed.). 2010. *Planning Latin America's Capital Cities, 1850–1950*, 2nd edn. London and New York: Routledge.
- Andermann, Jens and Patience A. Schell (curators). 2000. *Relics and Selves: Iconographies of the National in Argentina, Brazil and Chile, 1880–1890*. Web Exhibition, London. <http://www.bbk.ac.uk/ibamuseum/>
- Anderson, Benedict. 1991. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, revised edn. London and New York: Verso.
- Arana López, Gladys N. 2011. 'La Vivienda de la Burguesía en Mérida al Cambio de Siglo (1886–1916): la Vida Cotidiana en el Ámbito Privado' (The Middle-Class Home in Merida at the Turn of the Century, 1886–1916: Everyday Life in the Private Sphere), PhD dissertation. Michoacán, México: Universidad Michoacana de San Nicolás de Hidalgo.
- Bauer, Arnold J. 2001. *Goods, Power, History: Latin America's Material Culture*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bayly, Christopher. 2004. *The Birth of the Modern World, 1780–1914*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Blanco, Ricardo. 2005. 'El Diseño en Argentina, 1945–1965', in *Historia General del Arte en Argentina*, vol. 10. Buenos Aires: Academia Nacional de Bellas Artes, pp. 95–133.
- Bonsiepe Gui and Silvia Fernández (eds). 2008. *Historia del Diseño en América Latina y el Caribe: Industrialización y Comunicación Visual para la Autonomía* (Design History in Latin America and the Caribbean: Industrialization and Visual Communication Towards Autonomy). San Pablo: Editora Blucher.
- Bretos, Miguel A. 2004. 'The Nineteenth Century: Independence and National Identity, 1810–1910', in Marion Oettinger Jr. et al. (eds), *Retratos: 2000 Years of Latin American Portraits*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, pp. 147–206.

- Bushnell, David and Neill Macaulay. 1994. *The Emergence of Latin America in the Nineteenth Century*, 2nd edn. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Cardoso, Rafael, 2000. *Uma Introdução à História do Design* (An Introduction to the History of Design). São Paulo: Edgard Blücher.
- . 2005. *O Design Brasileiro antes do Design: Aspectos da História Gráfica, 1870–1960* (Brazilian Design before Design: Aspects of Graphic Design History, 1870–1960). São Paulo: CosacNaify.
- Comisarenco Mirkin, Dina. 2007. *Vida y Diseño en México, Siglo XX* (Life and Design in Mexico, Twentieth Century). Mexico: Fomento Cultural Banamex.
- Di Liscia, María Silia and Andrea Lluch (eds). 2009. *Argentina en Exposición: Ferias y Exhibiciones Durante los Siglos XIX y XX* (Fairs and Exhibitions in Argentina, Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries). Sevilla: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas.
- Duarte G., Carlos F. 1982. *El Mobiliario de la Época Republicana en Venezuela* (Furniture of the Republican Era in Venezuela). Caracas: Armitano Arte No. 1.
- . 2011. *Lozas de Staffordshire Conmemorativas de la Gran Colombia* (Staffordshire Pottery Commemorating the Gran Colombia). Caracas: Carlos Duarte.
- Elkin, Noah C. 1999. 'Promoting a New Brazil: National Expositions and Images of Modernity, 1861–1922', PhD dissertation. New Brunswick: Rutgers the State University of New Jersey.
- Fiss, Karen. 2009. 'Design in a Global Context: Envisioning Postcolonial and Transnational Possibilities', *Design Issues* 25(3): 3–10.
- García Canclini, Néstor. 1999. *La Globalización Imaginada* (Imagined Globalization). Paidós: Barcelona.
- . 2001. *Consumers and Citizens: Globalisation and Multicultural Conflicts*, trans. George Yudice. Manchester: University of Manchester Press.
- Gellner, Ernest. 1983. *Nations and Nationalism*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Gomes, Geraldo. 1995. 'Artistic Intentions in Iron Architecture', *The Journal of Decorative and Propaganda Arts* 21 (Brazil Theme Issue): 87–107.
- González Stephan, Beatriz and Jens Andermann (eds). 2006. *Galerías del Progreso: Museos, Exposiciones y Cultura Visual en América Latina* (Galleries of Progress: Museums, Exhibitions and Visual Culture in Latin America). Rosario, Argentina: Beatriz Viterbo Editora.
- Gross, Linda P. and Theresa R. Snyder. 2005. *Philadelphia's 1876 Centennial Exhibition*. Mt Pleasant, SC: Arcadia Publishing.
- Hobsbawm, Eric. 1990. *Nation and Nationalism since 1780*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Holton, Robert J. 2011. *Globalization and the Nation State*, 2nd edn. New York: Palgrave MacMillan.
- König, Hans-Joachim. 1994. *En el Camino Hacia La Nación: Nacionalismo en el Proceso de Formación del Estado y de la Nación de la Nueva Granada, 1750–1856*. (Nationalism in the Process of State and Nation Formation in New Granada, 1750–1856). Bogotá: Banco de la República.
- Lara-Betancourt, Patricia. 1997. 'La Sala Domestica en Santafé de Bogotá, Siglo XIX' (Displaying Civilization: The Drawing Room in Santafé de Bogotá, Nineteenth Century), MA dissertation. Bogotá: Universidad Nacional de Colombia.
- . 1998. 'La Sala Domestica en Santafé de Bogotá, Siglo XIX. El Decorado de la Sala Romántica: Gusto Europeo y Esnobismo' (The Romantic Salon in Santafé de Bogotá: European Taste and Snobbism in the Nineteenth Century), *Anuario Colombiano de Historia Social y de la Cultura* 25: 109–134. Retrieved from <http://www.banrepcultural.org/blaavirtual/revistas/revanuario/ancolh25/articul/art4/art4a.pdf>
- Martin, Gerald. 1985. 'The Literature, Music and Art of Latin America from Independence to c. 1870', in Leslie Bethell (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Latin America, Vol III*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 795–840.
- Martín-Barbero, Jesús. 2000. 'Globalización y Multiculturalidad: Notas para una Agenda de Investigación' (Globalization and Multiculturality: Notes for a Research Programme), in Mabel Moraña (ed.) *Nuevas Perspectivas Desde/Sobre América Latina: El Desafío de los Estudios*

- Culturales* (New Perspectives: From/About Latin America: The Challenge of Cultural Studies). Santiago de Chile, Cuarto Propio, pp. 17–30. Tercer Mundo.
- Mrotek, Bob. 2009. 'Lottery Building (Kiosco Morisco – Moorish Kiosk)', 2 May. Retrieved 7 May 2014 from <http://mexicobob.blogspot.co.uk/2009/05/kiosco-morisco-moorish-kiosk-mexican.html> and <http://www.cityvisions.com/mexico/kiosco.htm>
- Needell, Jeffrey D. 1988. *A Tropical Belle Epoque: Elite Culture and Society in Turn-of-the-Century Rio de Janeiro, Volume 62 of Cambridge Latin American Studies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Orlove, Benjamin and Arnold J. Bauer. 1997. 'Giving Importance to Imports', in Benjamin Orlove (ed.), *The Allure of the Foreign: Imported Goods in Postcolonial Latin America*. Michigan: University of Michigan Press, pp. 1–29.
- Pieterse, Jan Nederveen. 1995. 'Globalization as Hybridization', in M. Featherstone, S. Lash and R. Robertson (eds), *Global Modernities*. London: Sage, pp. 45–68.
- Rishel, Joseph J. with Suzanne Stratton-Pruitt (eds). 2006. *The Arts in Latin America, 1492–1820*. New Haven and London: Philadelphia Museum of Art and Yale University Press.
- Rivas P., Jorge F. 2007. *El Repertorio Clásico en el Mobiliario Venezolano: Siglos XVIII y XIX* (The Classical Repertoire in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Venezuelan Furniture). Colección Patricia Phelps de Cisneros, Cuaderno 9. Caracas: Fundación Cisneros.
- Scobie, James R. 1974. *Buenos Aires: Plaza to Suburb, 1870–1910*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Tenorio-Trillo, Mauricio. 1996. *Mexico at the World's Fairs: Crafting a Modern Nation*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Turner, B. 2007. 'Globalization, Empire and Religion in Asia', in P. Beyer and L. Beaman (eds), *Religion, Culture and Globalization*. Leiden: Brill, pp. 145–166.
- Williamson, Edwin. 1992. *The Penguin History of Latin America*. London: Penguin Books.
- Wimmer, Andreas and Nina Glick Schiller. 2002. 'Methodological Nationalism and Beyond: Nation State Building, Migration and the Social Sciences', *Global Networks* 24: 301–334.

Patricia Lara-Betancourt is a research fellow at The Modern Interiors Research Centre, Kingston University, London, UK. Within the field of modern interiors and design history, her research focuses on the themes of modernity, representation and identity. Recent publications include her co-authored chapter, 'Latin America 1830–1900,' in *History of Design: Decorative Arts and Material Culture, 1400–2000* (Yale University Press and Bard Graduate Center 2013), and 'Displaying Dreams: Model Interiors in the London Department Store, 1890–1914', in her co-edited and forthcoming volume *Architectures of Display: Department Stores and Modern Retail* (Routledge forthcoming). She is co-editor of *Performance, Fashion and the Modern Interior: From the Victorians to Today* (Berg 2011).