



Artists' Types from a Regional Perspective: A Study of Artists' Representations in Art Criticism from Chile, Argentina and Colombia in the 1870s and 1880s

Tipos de artistas a partir de uma perspectiva regional: um estudo das representações de artistas na crítica de arte no Chile, na Argentina e na Colômbia nas décadas de 1870 e 1880

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Imagem: Santiago Vaca Guzmán, *Ruinas de Humaita*, published in *La Ilustración Argentina* no. 7 (August 10, 1881: 73). Detalhe.

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Abstract

The present essay analyses artists' representations in Chile, Argentina and Colombia in art criticism in the 1870s and 1880s. The aim is not to give an exhaustive overview but to zoom in on a particular phenomenon: the discursive production of artists' types. These verbal depictions of artists were modeled on existing artists and represented the possibility of creating a national or American art scene. The focus lies on three artist types, imagined by three prominent voices: the 'almost national artist' of Pedro Lira (1845-1912), the 'American artist' of Santiago Vaca Guzmán (1847-1896) and the 'artist engraver' of Alberto Urdaneta (1845-1887). The artists-critics wrote these figures into being in response to the artistic challenges of distinct social, cultural, economic and political contexts. Yet, as the paper shows, their work is strongly connected through a regional perspective and a positivist belief in the civilizing role of art. The study of the figures sheds light on the discursive dynamic behind the creation of the art scenes, underscoring the importance of adopting a regional and relational perspective when examining the art discourses in South America.

Keywords

Art Criticism; American Artists; Artist Engravers; Regional Art History; Eduardo Schiaffino, Pedro Lira and Alberto Urdaneta.

Resumo

O presente artigo analisa as representações de artistas no Chile, na Argentina e na Colômbia em críticas de arte das décadas de 1870 e 1880. O objetivo não é oferecer uma visão geral exaustiva, mas focar-se em um fenômeno particular: a produção discursiva dos tipos de artistas. Essas representações verbais sobre os artistas foram modeladas em artistas existentes e representaram a possibilidade de criar uma cena artística nacional ou americana. O foco repousa em três tipos de artistas, imaginados por três vozes proeminentes: o 'artista quase nacional' de Pedro Lira (1845-1912), o 'artista americano' de Santiago Vaca Guzmán (1847-1896) e o 'artista gravador' de Alberto Urdaneta (1845-1887). Os artistas-críticos definiram essas figuras em resposta aos desafios artísticos em contextos sociais, culturais, econômicos e políticos distintos. No entanto, como mostra o artigo, o trabalho de todos está fortemente conectado por uma perspectiva regional e por uma crença positivista no papel civilizador da arte. O estudo das figuras ilumina a dinâmica discursiva por trás da criação das cenas artísticas, ressaltando a importância de se adotar uma perspectiva regional e relacional ao se examinar os discursos artísticos na América do Sul.

Palavras chave

Crítica de Arte; Artistas americanos; Gravadores; História da Arte Regional; Eduardo Schiaffino; Pedro Lira; Alberto Urdaneta.

Introduction¹

Scholars such as Alain Bonnet and Rachel Esner have shown that besides images, texts shaped the representation of artists throughout the nineteenth century. Newspapers, magazines, poetry and novels created and inspired multiple images of artists, ranging from the bohemian to the cultural diplomat, the socialite and the dissident². In Argentina, Chile and Colombia, the study of artists' representations in the printed press is still in its infancy. The focus is on visual representations, even though the work by Laura Malosetti Costa, María Isabel Baldasarre, Sandra Szir, Josefina de la Maza, Carolina Vanegas Carrasco and Wilson Ferney Jiménez opened up the field of art criticism and magazine studies³. Moreover, studies about artists' representations rarely look beyond national borders, except to address the relationship with European art⁴. Regional movement, however, marked the development of local art scenes throughout South America. Many artists travelled and/ or lived and worked in exile on the subcontinent. As a result, although the regional dimension of the art discourse was not as dominant as the transatlantic gaze, it is nonetheless present in art criticism. It appears in texts on specific artists, in brief comparisons and comments in articles, through the republication of foreign texts and in the few ambitious publications that mapped "American" art, most famously José Bernardo Suárez's *Tésoro de Bellas Artes* (1872).

The present paper analyses artists' representations in art criticism from Chile, Argentina and Colombia in the 1870s and 1880s. The aim is not to give an exhaustive overview, but to zoom in on a particular phenomenon: the discursive production of 'artist types'. These verbal depictions of artists were modeled on existing artists and represented the possibility of creating a national or American art scene. The focus lies on three artist types, imagined by three prominent voices: the 'almost national artist' of Pedro Lira (1845-1912), the 'American artist' of Santiago Vaca Guzmán (1847-1896) and the 'artist engraver' of Alberto Urdaneta (1845-1887). Lira, Vaca Guzmán and Urdaneta were all (artists-) critics with hybrid profiles that played a significant role in the development of the art scene in Chile, Argentina and Colombia, respectively. Lira was a lawyer and painter dedicated to art education – he translated and taught Hippolyte Taine's *Philosophie de l'art* –, the organization of exhibitions and the foundation of the National Museum of Fine Arts. Vaca Guzmán, a Bolivian in exile in Buenos Aires, was a lawyer, diplomat, writer and an amateur painter, committed to the activities of the Sociedad Estímulo de Bellas Artes, the first independent art association of Argentina that was founded in 1876. Urdaneta, like Pedro Lira, is considered a foundational figure in the art history of Colombia. He was a painter, caricaturist, writer, collector, farmer, activist and military general who founded the country's first fine arts magazine, *Papel Periódico Ilustrado* (1881-1889) and contributed to the organization of the Escuela de Bellas Artes.

The (artists-) critics – who most probably never met each other – wrote the figures of the 'almost national artist', the 'American artist' and the 'artist engraver' into being in response to the artistic challenges of the distinct social, cultural, economic and political contexts. They did not necessarily considered themselves as such. Urdaneta was not an 'artist engraver' and Vaca Guzmán was not an American artist. For Vaca Guzmán, painting was not even a profession. The artists' types were literary inventions, imagined from a specific context, which expressed a shared positivist belief in the civilizing role of art. Lira, Vaca Guzmán and Urdaneta faced societies in transition. In the 1870s and 1880s, Argentina witnessed a period of peace after years of civil wars⁵. The agro-export economy boomed, generating a boost in European immigration, and an increasing demand of a growing bourgeoisie for status objects. However, the fine arts were not a political priority; hence, there was no national fine arts museum nor a national academy until December 1895 and 1905 respectively⁶. In Chile, the Academia de Pintura was created as early as 1849 but the institutionalization of the fine arts and art criticism occurred roughly at the same moment as in Argentina, through exhibitions and the foundation of the national museum (1880) and art magazines. As De la Maza has shown, the War of the Pacific (1879-1884) had a significant

impact on this process (La Maza, 2016: 17-42). Colombia was torn by civil wars, political conflict and social unrest until the beginning of the twentieth century. Yet, from an art historical perspective, the period stands out because of the creation of the aforementioned Escuela de Bellas Artes and the *Papel Periódico Ilustrado* (1881-1889) (Arango Restrepo, 2011: 145-170).

The discursive figures were not country specific but appeared in the art discourse of various South American countries. For instance, in Argentina, the main narrative foretold the coming of a national artist until at least 1910. As a result, the majority of the artists were considered in the process of becoming national artists⁷. The artists' types travelled and transformed, depending on the context. The choice to study the 'almost national artist' in Chile, the 'American artist' in Argentina and the 'artist engraver' in Colombia was based on the strong connection between the work of Lira, Vaca Guzmán and Urdaneta. Each critic incorporated a regional perspective. Lira positioned Chile ahead of other South American nations in the development of the fine arts through the figure of the 'almost national artist'. Vaca Guzmán and Urdaneta, who were aware of what was happening in the Chilean art scene, also used artists' types to symbolically place incipient art movements on a South American cultural map. Interestingly, they both highlighted the role of the artist engraver but only Urdaneta transformed the figure into a national symbol. By contrast, Vaca Guzmán envisioned the birth of the American artist.

South American Pioneers? 'Almost National Artists' in Chile

In Santiago de Chile, the reflection about national art gained momentum during the *Primera Exposición Nacional de Artes e Industrias*, organized in 1872 in the new Mercado Central. The exhibition occurred in the context of the inauguration festivities of modern urbanization projects, and received unprecedented attention in the local press⁸. One of the texts that is particularly interesting is Pedro Lira's review that opposes different perspectives on the state of Chilean art. On the one hand, Lira considered the local art scene as far from promising. The exhibition had only 150 artworks on display by no more than 30 artists, of which, according to Lira, only a few made genuine artworks. It was a sharp contrast with the Parisian annual exhibitions that displayed roughly 6.000 artworks. The main problem was that the majority of the local artists worked in a tradition of *imitación europea* and failed to cultivate an individual style or to represent the country: "(...) en tanto que sus obras sean solo un reflejo más o menos disfrazado de creaciones ajenas, i no la reproducción fiel o idealizada de nuestra espléndida naturaleza, nosotros sostendremos tenaz i valientemente que la pintura nacional aún no ha nacido" (Lira, 1872: 875).

However, compared to the situation in 1865, the art scene was starting to flourish. Lira denied previous artistic accomplishments, stating there used to be nothing "worthy of the title of artwork" and highlighted the potential of contemporary artists such as Nicanor Plaza, Manuel Antonio Caro, Don Cosme San Martín and Miguel Campos to become national artists⁹.

Even though, for Lira, a national art had not yet arrived, he positioned Chile ahead of other South American nations. It had in addition to the presence of almost national artists, the infrastructure to secure the country's artistic future: a "complete art school". The academy, which was part of the Universidad de Chile, offered courses in painting, sculpture and architecture, with classes on anatomy, perspective, philosophy of art, and history of art. Moreover, an art library was on its way. According to the artist-critic, it was a unique institute in South America. In Argentina, Martín Boneo had already founded an academy, but for Lira he was "a painter of good intentions just as he was of bad artworks". In Peru, there was Francisco Laso and Ignacio Merino, "artists who developed in isolation in Europe, on their own account, and did not leave any visible traces in the Peruvian society". Ecuador, Nueva Granada (Colombia) and

Bolivia had “no artists, no schools and no *pensionistas*”¹⁰. As a result, he concluded: “our [Chile’s] superiority, however small it may be, is nevertheless out of the question” (Lira, 1872: 874).

In an article about the artists Cosme San Martín and Nicolás Guzmán, published a few months later, Lira implicitly announced the birth of a national art. San Martín and Guzmán were each other’s opposites in art and in life. San Martín was a *héroe del trabajo* who had never given up, even when his father died and he had to take responsibility for the family. He was a *hombre ejemplo*, rational and consistent. Guzmán, on the contrary, was more of a chaotic person who was “sometimes difficult to understand because of the strange and rapid stream of his ideas” (Lira, 1873: 701). His greatest qualities were his imagination and his love for science and novelties. At the academy, Guzmán’s epithet was Michelangelo, whereas San Martín was known as *Monsieur Ingres*. According to Lira, they were both promising artists except that: “San Martín es ya algo más que una esperanza, principia a ser una realidad. Guzmán no es todavía una realidad, pero es la esperanza más brillante de nuestra escuela. Será o no será: esta es la cuestión” (Lira, 1873: 702).

San Martín had achieved the status of a national artist because of his latest painting, *Sansón traicionado por Dalila*, considered “the most advanced step of Chilean painting in the most noble and difficult genre, history painting” (Lira, 1873: 700). It was not an impeccable masterpiece. Lira criticized the use of color but remarked that it was the fault of the director of the academy, Ernesto Kirchbach, who did not believe in the expressive value of color. In other words, Lira’s text about San Martín and Guzmán again highlighted the potential of local artists and the significance of the academy – that according to the critic had to adopt a different vision on art education. At the same time, by presenting San Martín and Guzmán as antipodes, it showed the versatility of the type of the (almost) national artist. Any artist could become a national artist. The most important criteria were artistic quality (a vague set of values based on academism), an individual style and the representation of national subject matter¹¹.

Lira’s texts appeared in the same period as José Bernardo Suárez’ ambitious publication *Tesoro de Bellas Artes*, an educative survey about music, painting, sculpture, engraving and architecture in Europe and (North and South) America¹². The *Tesoro* is organized by continent, and introduces the fine arts of each country with general historical summaries and, above all, a number of artists’ lives. Although the purpose is Universalist, an Americanist perspective drove the project:

Esa vituperable indiferencia, de parte de algunos representantes de las repúblicas sud-americanas por hacer conocer en el extranjero [sic] los hombres i las cosas de sus respectivos países, es la causa de que en Chile más sepamos lo que pasa en Francia o en Inglaterra, que lo que sucede en aquellas naciones hermanas. (...) Si entre nosotros mismos los sud-americanos no nos conocemos, ¿qué extraño [sic] es entonces que no nos conozcan en Europa i que nos supongan cubiertos de pieles cuando vestimos a la europea i contamos con notabilidades en las ciencias i en las artes? (Suárez, 1972: 10-11).

Suárez wanted to bridge the geocultural gap and to adjust the image of the Americas in Europe. However, considering the difficult conditions to receive information from Latin American countries, he inevitably presented a Chilean perspective on the history of art in the Americas, as is apparent from, for instance, the introduction that represents the Chilean situation as the common American condition, despite the strong regional differences (in the south and between the north and the south). The chapter

on Chilean fine arts is extensive and so are the references to the Chilean art movement in other entries. As a result, Santiago de Chile is implicitly posited as the intellectual and artistic center of the region¹³.

Suárez thanked Pedro Lira “the honor of art in Chile”, “for the support he gives [art] with his pen, for his admirable consecration and for the honesty of his family”. His texts were an important source for the chapter on the visual arts in Chile (Suárez, 1972: 8-9, 417). Consequently, the *Tesoro* also represented Chilean national art in a privileged state of development. He claimed: “since Chile is the newest country in South America, it should not be questioned that the fine arts did not made the greatest progress” (*Ibidem*: 404-405). In the opening paragraph of the biography of the first Chilean painter, Francisco Mandiola, a note asks the reader “not to consider [the artists] in any way from an absolute point of view, but in relation to the development of our young society” – the same perspective as in Lira’s texts of 1872. In Chile and America, “the fine arts were still in its infancy” (*Ibidem*: 449). Yet, at the same time, Nicánor Plaza was “the first South American sculptor” and contemporary artists such as Pedro Lira, Don Cosme San Martín and Miguel Campos were “Chile’s hope” (*Ibidem*: 419). In other words, Chile’s art scene was promising, which was significant in the context of the Americas where the fine arts were considered to be absent or in development¹⁴. Moreover, in a brief exposé, Suárez explained “the causes of the decadence of the fine arts in Europe”, opening up a symbolical space in the future for an American nation to become the new artistic center¹⁵.

The (superior) position of Chile became part of the regional discourse about the fine arts in Spanish speaking South America. The Argentinian newspaper *La Patria Argentina* republished art criticism by the Chilean sculptor José Miguel Blanco, who complained that there was no work for artists because nobody understood art in Chile. At the same time, however, by sketching an even more hopeless situation in Argentina in the introduction, the reprint implicitly confirms the superiority of the art scene in Santiago de Chile (Blanco, 1881). In *La Ilustración Argentina*, the author Rafael Obligado expressed a similar critique, questioning why Peru, Chile, Mexico and Uruguay did manage to produce valuable artworks, whereas Argentina, which “[a]s no other South American country (...), developed such a high degree of imaginative competence”, did not¹⁶. According to Obligado, there was nothing exceptional about the South American art movements. It was the absence of art in Argentina that was remarkable¹⁷. In the same magazine, a few issues later, Santiago Vaca Guzmán, a Bolivian diplomat, lawyer, writer and painter who lived and worked in Argentina, went even further than Obligado, and bluntly questioned whether there exists a mature art in the Americas as whole. In his negative answer, he explicitly denied the importance of Chilean and Uruguayan artists:

No tenemos un arte propio, y lo que es más, no hemos echado aun bases sólidas para formarlo; existe sobrada disposición natural; aun podríamos agregar, existe jénio [sic], voluntad y material abundante para producir un mundo nuevo en el nuevo mundo. Por el momento, aun cuando nuestros vecinos de ultracordillera [sic] y los del otro lado del Plata alardeen de poseer tal o cual artista, de mérito disputable, nuestra ansiedad no alcanza a descubrir algo que lleve el prestigio [sic] de una escuela o el sello de una grande obra (Guzmán, 1881: 51).

In Colombia, Alberto Urdaneta acknowledged Chile's artistic progress but only to highlight the importance of his own publication *Papel Periódico Ilustrado* (1881-1887). It was a way to legitimate the engraver as a true artist and demonstrate Colombia's artistic progress¹⁸.

Briefly put, the Chilean art scene was a rhetorical element used by critics to reflect upon the development of the fine arts in their own contexts. Unlike most critics, Vaca Guzmán and Urdaneta did not use it to envision the coming of national artists at home. They proposed different narratives, focused on the 'American artist' and the 'artist engraver' respectively. In order to understand why, it is important to look at the critics' roles and personal aspirations in the incipient art scenes in Argentina and Colombia.

The Absence of 'American Artists'

Santiago Vaca Guzmán's production of texts on the fine arts is small but significant¹⁹. For the most part, he concentrates on the visual arts in "America" and thus distinguished himself from most of his peers whose primary concern was the creation of a national art. Argentinian critics and artists such as Eduardo Schiaffino or Carlos Gutiérrez thought about national art like Pedro Lira did in Chile. Vaca Guzmán's perspective corresponds to that of José Bernardo Suárez in the sense that he wanted to unite the continent. Vaca Guzmán's texts, however, are marked by a "plurality of vision", to use an expression of Edward Said. For Said, the awareness of more than one reality and culture was one of the few positive aspects of living in exile (Said, 2000: 186). Vaca Guzmán, an intellectual who was exiled twice because of his political beliefs, wrote from Buenos Aires, thinking about Bolivia²⁰. The figure of the "American artist" was a figure that united both countries in a continental perspective. Yet, the regional neutrality of the notion of an 'American art' was often disrupted by a clear promotion of the Argentinian art movement – a consequence of his commitment to the local art scene. He was a member of the independent art association, the Sociedad Estímulo de Bellas Artes, and founded the Sociedad's magazine *El Arte en el Plata*. He also represented the association in magazine *La Gaceta Musical* and contributed – as a writer and artistic director – to *La Ilustración Argentina*, the literary and fine arts magazine that continued the project of *El arte en el Plata*, though not owned by the Sociedad²¹.

Vaca Guzmán expounded his Americanist vision in his first art criticism published in Argentina, "El arte", the editorial of the first and only issue of *El Arte en el Plata* (1878). The text foretells the coming of an American artist in an evolutionary narrative that is tributary to Hippolyte Taine's *Philosophie de l'art*. Taine's famous dictum of *race, milieu* and *moment* resounds in the author's description of the "Latin people" as an "imaginative race by origin", embodying "the splendors of Spain" and "the sensitivity, elevation and greatness of thought of America". "To found an American art", he wrote, "the horizon is vast and the scenario magnificent". Hence, the time had come for artists to create and "sing the glories of the Fatherland" (Vaca Guzmán, 1878: 2-3). Although the reference to the "Fatherland" can be read as a stimulus for a national art, from Vaca Guzmán's point of view it meant painting Bolivian landscapes and history in Argentina. Briefly put, the author summoned artists to represent South American subject matter and to contribute to a movement that went beyond national borders.

Vaca Guzmán rarely referred to specific American artists. For instance, in "El Arte", the only names that are mentioned are European artists and writers, and William Hoppin, the secretary of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. The few texts dedicated to 'American artist' are marked by a tension between the national

and regional perspective. In “El Pampa, primeros ensayos de la escultura Argentina”, a constructive critique of the sculpture *El Pampa* by the young Argentinian artist Lucio Correa Morales, Vaca Guzmán questioned why America has not yet received a place in the international canon of sculpture. He acknowledged the potential of the artist who resided in Florence at the time, but also he urged him to further develop his art. Interestingly, he contradicted Correa Morales’ nationalist intention to embody the inhabitant of the Argentinian pampas, presenting the sculpture as “more than a *pampa*”, but as the “wild man” of Latin America (Guzmán, 1878: 75). In this way, he superimposed his Americanist perspective upon the subject and cast a different light on the title of his text, “the first essays of Argentinian sculpture”. For Vaca Guzmán, Argentinian artists were American artists, and Argentinian art was American art.

The absence of references to American artists in his work corresponds with his claim that there were not yet American artists. In *La Ilustración Argentina*, in the same article in which he denied the existence of a Chilean and Uruguayan art, he named four reasons why. Firstly, the turbulent past of civil wars and international conflicts had obstructed each form of artistic development. Secondly, important Spanish heritage had disappeared after the independence wars, and what remained was of such a low quality that it could not constitute a basis for creating a new tradition. Thirdly, in contrast with the “invasion” of European literature, there was almost no European art in Latin America. Lastly, the absence of a market made it impossible for artists to create. He concluded with the words of Ingres: “In art we can only achieve an honorable result, crying. He who does not suffer does not believe”²².



Fig. 1. Santiago Vaca Guzmán, *Ruinas de Humaitá*, published in *La Ilustración Argentina* n. 7 (August 10, 1881: 73).

Vaca Guzmán underpinned his discourse with a series of illustrated articles that shifted the focus from artists to politics. “Humaitá” (Vaca Guzmán, 1881: 73-75) looks at the history of the eponymous Paraguayan village from its colonial foundation until the War of the Triple Alliance. Vaca Guzmán illustrated the text with the drawing *Ruinas de Humaitá* that visualizes the disastrous consequences of the War [Fig. 1]. His article on and his drawings of El Chaco, published two issues later, dealt with the same subjects of the Paraguayan War and the border dispute between Argentina and Paraguay, focusing on the history of Villa Occidental and Villa Formosa (Vaca Guzmán, 1881: 97-99).²³ Malosetti Costa (2007: 89–90) reads these historical analyses as pleas for liberty and peace. A history of colonial rule, civil wars and international conflicts hampered cultural progress on the continent. In this way, Vaca Guzmán held politicians responsible for the absence of visual arts in societies and demonstrated that independence and liberty were key conditions for a society that wishes to create art.

As the artistic director of *La Ilustración Argentina*, Vaca Guzmán continued this political editorial course in the following issues by publishing drawings by Paraguayan artists, made during the Paraguayan War. The majority are caricatures that originally appeared in the newspaper *El Centinela*. A small note – most likely written by Vaca Guzmán – explains why this newspaper pioneered in publishing wood engravings in Latin America. According to the writer, these “artistic works” were remarkable, taking the harsh conditions in which the artists operated into account²⁴. *El Centinela* was one of the magazines that emerged during the government of Francisco Solano López and were used as instruments of war. The high grade of literacy among the soldiers made it possible to inform, support and mobilize the army via the printed press. The engravings played an important role because they expressed ideas and feelings about the international conflict in a direct manner. Their quality and function also transformed over time. The engravings of the later issues showed more technical skill and were less dependent on the text: no longer mere illustrations, they gave a proper interpretation to the discourse (Escobar, 2007).

Vaca Guzmán’s discourse is ambiguous. On the one hand, it highlights the absence of American artists and, on the other, it expressed a strong belief in the coming of such as figure. However, the American artist was not yet in sight. He saw potential among Argentinian artists and highlighted the quality of artistic print culture of the region. More than the Argentinian artists, the Paraguayan engravers showed that without political turmoil a true art movement would have already flourished in South America. In other words, they were the precursors of the American artists to come. Vaca Guzmán’s appreciation of artistic print culture was also self-referential. It endorsed his own personal ventures in the field of the printed press. From this perspective, the foundation of *El Arte en el Plata*, his contributions to *La Gaceta Musical* and *La Ilustración Argentina* were steps towards building “a novel world in the new world”, both in terms of art and politics.

Vaca Guzmán was not alone in considering magazines privileged spaces for art that even in times of war contributed to the process of civilization. In Colombia, Alberto Urdaneta adhered a similar vision, but from a nationalist perspective. In the *Papel Periódico Ilustrado*, Colombia’s first magazine dedicated to the fine arts, he developed a strong program of high quality engravings, representing primarily national imagery and reproductions of European artworks. Urdaneta was convinced that the images would educate the public, generate good taste and contribute to the country’s development. In this manner, a new national discursive figure emerged that was not a precursor but a genuine artist: the ‘artist engraver’.

The 'Artist Engraver': a National Figure in Colombia

Alberto Urdaneta founded the *Papel Periódico Ilustrado* in between civil wars, claiming political neutrality: he wanted to unite voices from all sides of the political spectrum – liberals and conservatives – “in the peaceful sand, the friendly field, where the nine [muses] of Parnassus and the divine Apollo preside” (Urdaneta, 1881: 3). Yet, as scholars such as Carolina Vanegas and Wilson Ferney Jiménez Hernández have convincingly demonstrated, the magazine was a medium in support of the conservative Regeneration Movement²⁵. Urdaneta had used the printed press as a political instrument throughout his life and this did not change after his exile in Paris in 1878-1880²⁶. Compared to the previous publications such as the militant *El Mochuelo*, the *Papel Periódico Ilustrado* expressed his political bias more subtly. It is merely visible in the mechanisms underlying the creation of the publication, such as the selection of topics and artworks and the focus on particular national heroes and historical events. Urdaneta tried to hide his political color by placing the emphasis on patriotic sentiment. Each editorial text ended with the magazine's motto *Pro Patria*. This partly changed during the civil war of 1884-1885 when he showed his support for the Regeneration Movement by signing his articles as “General Alberto Urdaneta” – the military rank he held in the war against a fraction of the Liberal Party²⁷.

The absence of a national art scene made it difficult to be patriotic about the fine arts. In the first issue of *Papel Periódico Ilustrado*, Urdaneta mentioned “in the matter of national painting and sculpture, even works of limited merit will receive our attention, given the incipency of these branches in Colombia”. Reproductions of European artworks had to “generate taste” and cultural knowledge²⁸. As a result, the majority of the engravings represented national subjects, based on photographs and drawings, and only a few represented artworks. At the start of the second year, Urdaneta highlighted the difficulties of creating an illustrated magazine in Colombia. The most complicated issue was the collaboration with the different actors: “It is necessary to unite the efforts of the painter, photographer [sic.] engraver and printer in order to achieve a good result and this, as one easily understands, seems impossible [here]”. The *Papel Periódico Ilustrado* “had not yet reached the end of what [it] proposes [to be]” but it would. Urdaneta referred to the revolutionary work carried out by Antonio Rodríguez at the University of Bogotá. Rodríguez was a Spanish engraver who had travelled with him from Paris to Colombia to work on the publication and to teach Colombian artists the art of woodcutting (Urdaneta, 1882: 2).

Interestingly, there was no discourse about the necessity to found national art institutions and support local artists²⁹. The first few years, the magazine dealt with the visual arts, focusing on the art of engraving and reproducing a few artworks by French artists such as Paul Dubois, Gustave Doré and William-Adolphe Bouguereau. Art criticism is limited to a correspondence about Paris, a study of the representation of Simon Bolívar, and brief informative comments about the engravings. A recurring annual subject was the *Concurso del grabado en madera*, organized in collaboration with the university where Rodríguez was teaching. Until at least 1886, the magazine did not speak of the coming of a national art. Instead, it mapped and discussed the local development of the art of engraving in texts and images. It described the history and artistic process of woodcutting, and the importance and results of Rodríguez' class. The engravings appear with the engravers' signatures, and the brief commentary texts accompanying the images generally include references to the engraver. For instance, Manuel Briceño's (1882: 116) short text about Urdaneta's portrait of Gonzalo Jiménez de Quesada [Fig. 2] explains the

painting's symbolism and concluded saying "if the artist knew how to read the past to interpret the figure of Gonzalo Jiménez de Quesada, the engraver Daudenarde understood and fatefully interpreted the artist's thoughts".

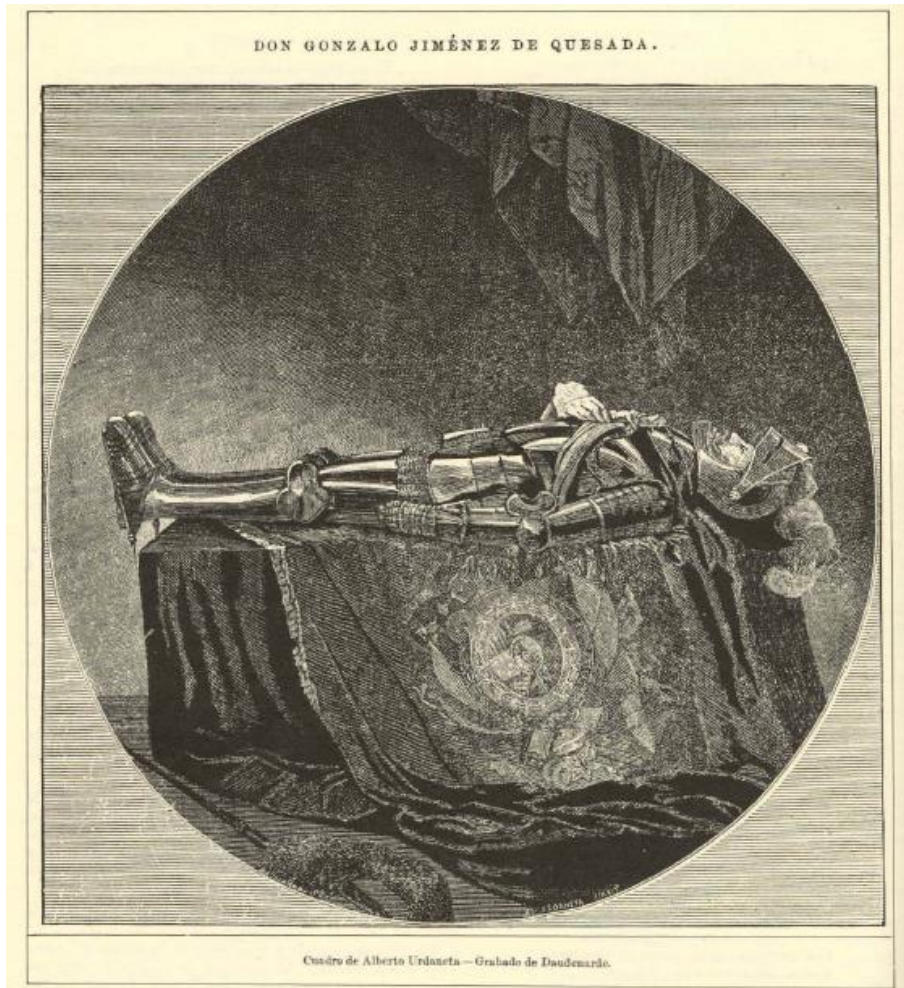


Fig. 2. Alberto Urdaneta, *Don Gonzalo Jiménez de Quesada*. Engraving by Daudenarde, published in *Papel Periódico Ilustrado* (Bogotá, January 1, 1882: 16).

According to Urdaneta (1882: 242-43), the process of engraving should be understood as creative. For him, the engraver is like a musician interpreting a composition:

La misión del artista grabador, al interpretar la obra del artista dibujante, es de tan grande importancia, que sólo pudiéramos compararla a la del músico ejecutante, que al ejecutar

la obra del músico compositor puede interpretar con más o menos acierto la idea y el sentimiento que éste se propuso al concebir su obra, y muchas veces hasta realizar su espíritu por su modo de ejecución.

The *grabador* was an *artista grabador* and engraving the *arte compañero de la civilización*: “it did not only represent the natural beauties of the country, but all of [the country’s] progress in every sense”³⁰. The conceptual shift implied that the state of the art of engraving symbolized the nation’s state of civilization. In every “powerful country”, the art of engraving influenced society’s development (Urdaneta, 1882: 273). In other words, Colombia was en route to becoming a “powerful country”. Urdaneta confirmed this evolution throughout the issues. If at the start of the magazine, there were still doubts about the enterprise, by the fourth year, he claimed a pioneering role in Latin America, referring to the magazine’s impact in the Chile, “an enlightened country that marches at the head of South American progress”. Urdaneta emphasized the importance of the Chilean academy and the government’s commitments to the fine arts, and explained how the engravings of the *Papel Periódico Ilustrado* had persuaded this government to initiate a course on engraving at the Universidad de Santiago. The “words of encouragement” from Santiago de Chile confirmed the significance of the publication and Colombia’s artistic development in general. He quoted the minister, praising the magazine and describing engraving as “a new art that will encourage and stimulate many young [Chilean] artists” (Urdaneta, 1884: 2). The Colombian artist engraver became an international figure that, hopefully, would inspire new generations of artists abroad.

In April 1886, the Escuela de Bellas Artes (re)opened its doors in Bogotá³¹. Alberto Urdaneta was the director and the event was elaborately celebrated in the *Papel Periódico Ilustrado*. The school and its activities became a central subject, bringing all of the *bellas artes* to the attention³². The first exhibition that included ancient artworks from private and public collections generated a focus on the subject of a national tradition. Without entering into detail, it is important to point out that a new narrative arrived. The texts represent Gregorio Vásquez de Arce y Ceballos (1638-1711), a Baroque painter born in Nueva Granada, as the national artist *par excellence*. He was both the Rafael and Michelangelo of Colombia, “born as an artist, just like Bolívar was born a warrior”³³. However, the art of engraving remained in the spotlight through images and texts until the early death of Urdaneta in 1887 and the abrupt ending of the *Papel Periódico Ilustrado*.

Final Considerations

Urdaneta’s discourse about the “artist engraver” was part of an actual project, supported by the academy and Spanish engraver Antonio Rodríguez. In other words, the “artist engraver” was just briefly an imaginary figure. Vaca Guzmán’s project of an American art was more complicated to be accomplished since it contrasted with nationalist perspectives and demanded a strong regional artistic network. In addition, his activity in the art scene was mainly reflective, which is why his impact is most visible in the art discourse rather than in the art production³⁴. Yet, both the “artist engraver” and the “American artist” faded into the background of art history to make way for the overarching figure of the national artist. From this perspective, the figures embody art scenes in transition. In a society with no official art circuit, the printed press was a privileged space to discuss and show art. The artist engraver brought artworks to the public and made it possible to see and judge award winning paintings and sculptures from the

French salon without having to travel. In addition, the illustrated press was a means to create a national and/or regional imaginary world, defining notions such as identity, taste and art. The coming of national painters and sculptors, and institutes such as museums and academies did not make the artist engraver obsolete. It rather caused a shift in the relationship between the public, critics and art. Engravings, however, remained a powerful instrument in the global circulation of art.

The mobility of magazines and engravings was what attracted Vaca Guzmán in his search for American art. Although a thorough study of the concept in the nineteenth century is lacking, it can be said that the notion primarily appeared in contexts marked by migration, travel and exile. Vaca Guzmán's Americanist perspective was based on his personal experience of living and working in Argentina. Interestingly, Urdaneta briefly promoted American art from the pages of *Los Andes*, the magazine he cofounded in Paris. The objective of *Los Andes* was similar to that of Suárez' *Tesoro*: to produce a more truthful (and more positive) image of the (Latin) American nations in Europe and create a union that would facilitate cultural and intellectual exchange (R.S.P., 1878:98). The discourse about "American art" and "American artist" by intellectuals from Latin America differed greatly from the European (mainly French and Spanish) discourse that projected a preconceived idea of primitivism upon the continent.³⁵ Hence, it is important to integrate the regional perspective in the study of nineteenth century art from South America.

The present paper demonstrated how Urdaneta and Vaca Guzmán positioned themselves and their projects in relationship to the Chilean art scene and revealed their shared interest in print culture and wood engravings. It can be concluded that the critics' activities highlight above all the importance of art magazines in the process of establishing an art scene and developing the artistic professional in the sub-continent. In order to gain more insight into their work and into the "background of art history" in general, more studies are necessary. The concepts of the 'artist engraver' and the 'American artist' travelled and were adapted to specific situations throughout South America. For instance, the Uruguayan artists Juan Manuel Blanes and Miguel Pallejá saw themselves and/or were considered American artists³⁶. The Chilean magazine *El Taller Ilustrado* reviewed the state of engraving in Chile "and other American countries", concluding that the country counts merely one lithographer and one or two students capable of illustrating a magazine (S.n., 1889). A mapping and thorough analysis of these kinds of figures would further expose the discursive dynamics of the creation of art scenes, including the circulation of knowledge and the significance of the regional gaze, and perhaps lead to the discovery of other artists' types.

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Notas

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² Alain Bonnet, ed., *L'artiste en représentation images des artistes dans l'art du XIXe siècle* (Lyon: Fage edition, 2012); Rachel Esner, "In the artist's studio with L'illustration," *RIHA Journal*, n. 69 (2013), <<http://www.riha-journal.org/articles/2013/2013-jan-mar/esner-illustration>>.

³ Laura Malosetti Costa, *Los primeros modernos. Arte y sociedad en Buenos Aires a fines del siglo XIX* (Buenos Aires: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2001); María Isabel Baldasarre, *Los dueños del arte: Coleccionismo y consumo cultural en Buenos Aires* (Buenos Aires: Edhasa, 2006); Sandra Szir, "Imagen impresa y cultura gráfica," in *Ilustrar e imprimir. Una historia de la cultura gráfica en Buenos Aires, 1830-1930*, ed. Sandra Szir (Buenos Aires: Ampersand, 2016: 15–22); Josefina de la Maza, *De obras maestras y mamarrachos* (Santiago de Chile: Ediciones metales pesados, 2016); Carolina Vanegas Carrasco, "Disputas monumentales. La celebración del Centenario de la Independencia de Colombia a través de sus monumentos conmemorativos (Bogotá, 1910)" (Universidad Nacional de San Martín Buenos Aires, Argentina, 2015); Wilson Ferney Jiménez Hernández, "El Papel Periódico Ilustrado y la configuración del proyecto de la Regeneración (1881-1888)," *Historia Crítica*, no. 47 (2012: 115–38).

⁴ María Isabel Baldasarre's work is an exception because it integrates a regional perspective. María Isabel Baldasarre, "Representação e autorrepresentação na arte da América Latina: retratos de artistas," *Nava 2* (2017: 126–49). Other important studies are: María Isabel Baldasarre, "Representación y auto-representación en el arte argentino: retratos de artistas en la primera mitad del siglo XX," *Anales del instituto de investigaciones estéticas*, n. 100 (2012: 171–203); María Isabel Baldasarre, "Con la paleta, el pincel y el caballete. Los artistas en las 'Caricaturas contemporáneas' de Caras y Caretas," *Huellas: búsquedas en artes y diseño*, n. 9 (2016: 81–96).

⁵ It should be pointed out that it was not a period of peace for the indigenous communities that were violently murdered in the territorial campaigns such as the *Conquista del desierto* headed by General Julio A. Roca. Pedro Navarro Floria, "El desierto y la cuestión del territorio en el discurso político argentino sobre la frontera Sur," *Revista complutense de historia de América*, n. 28 (2002: 139–168); Andrés Bonatti and Javier Valdez, *Una guerra infama. Anales del instituto de investigaciones estéticas* (Buenos Aires: Edhasa, 2014).

⁶ For a general introduction on Argentinian art in 1870s and 1880s, see: (Malosetti Costa, 2001).

⁷ See for instance the discourse of Eduardo Schiaffino at Saint Louise Purchase Exhibition and the criticism in the press. Marta Penhos, "Saint Louis 1904. Argentina en escena", in *Argentina en exposición: ferias y exhibiciones durante los siglos XIX y XX*, ed. María Silvia Di Liscia and Andrea Lluch (Sevilla: Consejo superior de investigaciones científicas, n.d.), 59–84; Eduardo Schiaffino, "La exposición de San Luis. La sección artística argentina. Reminiscencias," in *Cuadros de viaje: artistas argentinos en Europa y Estados Unidos (1880 - 1910)*, ed. Laura Malosetti Costa (Buenos Aires: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2008), 213–27. For a detailed study see also the unpublished PhD dissertation: Laurens Dhaenens, "Writing art into being. The imaginary creation of an Argentinian art scene in late nineteenth-century art criticism" (University of Leuven, 2017).

⁸ The event took place in the new Mercado Central; Santiago's first building with an iron structure. The exhibition is also known as the *Exposición del Mercado*. Catalina Valdés Echenique, "Cuadros de la naturaleza en Chile. La pintura de paisaje y la crítica de arte hacia la segunda mitad del siglo XIX," in *Cuadros de la naturaleza en Chile. La pintura de paisaje y su literatura artística durante en siglo XIX*, ed. Catalina Valdés Echenique (Santiago de Chile: Universidad Alberto Hurtado, 2014): 13–14).

⁹ Lira also saw a remarkable improvement in Antonio Smith's recent landscape paintings (Lira, 1872: 871-75).

¹⁰ *Pensionistas* were artists livings and working in Europe with a private or public scholarship.

¹¹ The subject of a nationality in art has already be thoroughly analyzed in Chile by scholars such as De la Maza and Catalina Valdés Echenique: de la Maza, *De obras maestras y mamarrachos*; Catalina Valdés Echenique, "Por un paisaje nacional: la montaña como imagen de Chile en la pintura del siglo XIX," in *Los riesgos traen oportunidades. Transformaciones globales en Los Andes sudamericanos*, ed. Axel Borsdorf et al. (Santiago de Chile: Instituto de Geografía UC, 2014), 109–26.

¹² José Bernardo Suárez (1822-1919) was a pedagogue who graduated from the first normal school in Chile and of which Domingo Faustino Sarmiento was the director. He dedicated his work to education. He taught and published numerous books, biographies and manuals. Some of them were adapted to the educational system of other countries such as Mexico and Argentina. Carlos Valdivia Castro, *Rápida mirada al panorama de la obra del primer preceptor primario y escritor didáctico Don José Bernardo Suárez* (Santiago de Chile: Sociedad profesores de instrucción primaria, 1933).

¹³ For instance, it mentions the Chilean stays of American composer Louis Moreau Gottschalk, *Ecuadorian painter Luis Cadena*, *Peruvian composer José Isidoro Alzedo*, etc. *The Argentinian introduction of the fine arts in Argentina focuses on the provinces of Mendoza, Tucumán and San Juan, and most of the artists passed by, or lived in, Chile. His selection of artists was most probably determined by his contact person to whom he dedicated the Argentinian section, Nemecio Quiroga. Bernardo Suárez, 1972, 320, 356, 392–96.*

¹⁴ According to Suárez, Mexico was supposed to be the country where the fine arts made most progress. Yet, this was not case. In the introduction of the Mexican entry, he explained why (Suárez, 1972: 328-330).

¹⁵ See: "Causas de la decadencia de las bellas artes en Europa" (Suárez, 1972: 312-316).

¹⁶ Rafael Obligado, "Ballerini," *La Ilustración Argentina*, n. 2 (January 20, 1881: 14).

¹⁷ Interestingly, Obligado briefly discussed Ecuadorian colonial art, referring to painters such as Miguel Santiago, Gorivar González and Morales Vela. By focusing on colonial art in the region, he left the path open for Argentina to pioneer in creating a genuine modern art tradition in South America. The analysis is base on Pedro Fermin Cevallos' *Resumen de la historia del Ecuador*, published in Lima in 1870.

¹⁸ The *Papel Periódico Ilustrado* is studied below, in the section "the Artist-Engraver".

¹⁹ Vaca Guzmán published approximately fifteen articles in the magazines *El arte en el Plata*, *La Gaceta Musical* and *La Ilustración Argentina*.

²⁰ The first time, in 1867, during the tyranny of Mariano Melgarejo, he fled to the eastern regions of Bolivia. The second time, in 1871, when Agustín Morales was in power, he fled to Buenos Aires where he lived until his death in 1896. Edgar Oblitas Fernández, *Santiago Vaca Guzmán y su época* (Cochabamba: Grafi-Car, 1999), 12–13, 23–24; 135–137; Paul H. Lewis, *Authoritarian regimes in Latin America: Dictators, despots, and tyrants* (Lanham, Boulder, New York, Toronto, Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2006).

²¹ Oblitas Fernández, *Santiago Vaca Guzmán y su época*, 55–57; also quoted in Laurens Dhaenens, "Faire et écrire l'histoire de l'art à Buenos Aires dans les années 1870 et 1880: de Santiago Vaca Guzman à Eduardo Schiaffino," *Histoire de l'art*, n. 79 (2016): 71-80.

²² "On n'arrive dans l'art à un résultat honorable qu'en pleurant. Qui ne souffre pas, ne croit pas" (Vaca Guzmán, 1881: 51-52).

²³ Unfortunately, the images are lost. The only available information are the titles of the artworks, mentioned in the index of the issue: *Iglesia de Villa Occidental* and *Iglesia primitiva de Formosa*.

²⁴ S.n., "Curiosidades históricas," *La Ilustración Argentina*, n. 7 (March 10, 1882: 74).

²⁵ By the end of the 1870s, political conflicts and social unrest provoked the idea that the Nation had to be "regenerated"– unified and reorganized. The Regeneration Movement was a conservative movement that acted against the leading liberal regime and that could count on the support of the Catholic Church.

²⁶ As a member of the conservative guerrilla *El Mochuelo*, he fought against the government of president Aquileo Parra in 1876-1877, and created the homonymous magazine that, punctuated with caricatures, openly criticized the *Radicalismo* of the liberal party. The publication led to his exile in Paris where he founded *Los Andes* together with fellow-countrymen Ignacio Gutiérrez Ponce and Ricardo S. Pereira. *Los Andes* was a *semanario ilustrado americano* that had an elaborate graphic program and focused on cultural subjects. It anticipated the *Papel Periódico Ilustrado* except that the perspective was Americanist or, as some scholars like Juanita Solano (2011) argue, Universalist.

²⁷ Vanegas Carrasco, "Disputas monumentales. La celebración del centenario de la Independencia de Colombia a través de sus monumentos conmemorativos (Bogotá, 1910)," 58–65; Jiménez Hernández, "El Papel Periódico Ilustrado y la configuración del proyecto de la regeneración (1881-1888)."

²⁸ S.n., "Bellas Artes," *Papel Periódico Ilustrado* (Bogotá, August 6, 1881:16).

²⁹ One of the few exceptions is the text by Germán Vargas that touches upon the absence of an art school, criticizing the government: "Una ley de la Nación dispuso que el Poder Ejecutivo estableciera una escuela de artes y oficios; pues de esa ley hizo el Gobierno letra muerta. Germán Vargas, "La fábrica de loza," *Papel Periódico Ilustrado*, May 25, 1883, 284.

³⁰ Urdaneta, 242; Alberto Urdaneta, "Dos grabados," *Papel Periódico Ilustrado* (Bogotá, June 1, 1882), 273.

³¹ The Escuela de Bellas Artes was founded by decree in 1872 but it did not function properly until 1886 due to the political conflict. Arango Restrepo, "Comienzos de la enseñanza académica de las artes plásticas en Colombia".

³² The change already announced itself in the first issue of 1885 and more specifically in the thorough study of the *Madonna della seggiola* by Rafael that announced more reproductions of masterworks in the magazine. See (Urdaneta, 1885).

³³ Luis Mejía Restrepo, "Vázquez y su obra," *Papel Periódico Ilustrado*, October 15, 1886, 154. Vázques' life and work were converted into a national myth and became a new point of departure for the reflection about a national art. For a thorough study on the topic see: (Rojas Gómez, 2014: 205–230).

³⁴ I did not elaborate upon their roles in the art scenes since it falls beyond the scope of the article. Moreover, it has been thoroughly studied. See for instance: (Dhaenens, 2016). Also, the special issue of *Credencial Historia: Alberto Urdaneta y la academia*, n. 314 (2016), <<http://www.banrepcultural.org/biblioteca-virtual/credencial-historia/numero-314>>.

³⁵ The reception of Latin American artists in Paris and other European capitals is a thoroughly studied subject. See for instance (Majluf, 1997); Malosetti Costa (2001).

³⁶ Blanes, who painted subjects from Uruguay, Argentina, Paraguay and Chile, saw himself as an American painter. The work of Pallejá was Americanist or nationalist, depending on who wrote about his art. Vaca Guzmán referred to the Americanist project of Pallejá. Artist and art critic Eduardo Schiaffino ended his text about the small exhibition of Pallejá, organized at Casa Bossi in 1883, saying that he would ask the painter to represent the countryside, if there had been a public interested in a national art. Santiago Vaca Guzmán, "José M. Pallejá," *La Ilustración Argentina*, no. 21 (July 30, 1882: 245–46); Pincel (Schiaffino, Eduardo), "El pintor Pallejá. Una exhibición artística," *El Diario*, June 15, 1883. For the nationalist appropriation in Uruguay, see the comprehensive selection of art criticism republished in S.n., *Miguel Pallejá* (Buenos Aires: La Tribuna Nacional, n.d.).

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