

An American friend: Lincoln Kirstein in Argentina in the years of the Good Neighbor Diplomacy

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ABSTRACT:

In recent years, studies on cultural networks and their implications in Latin America have attracted the attention of many researchers. The case of the networks created between North and South America during the 1940s illustrates how cultural diplomacy had designed tools to strengthen the bonds of the so-called Good Neighbor Policy. During World War II, some institutions such as the OCIAA (Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs) or institutions like the MOMA (Museum of Modern Art) (both linked to the Rockefeller family) played an essential role in promoting the policy of mutual understanding and cultural exchange between the two Americas. One of the most influential and significant tools the U.S. government used to reinforce this policy was to send Latin-American, prominent figures to represent the United States. Personalities such as René D'Haroncourt, Alfred H. Barr, Waldo Frank, or Grace Morley, among those related to the fine arts; Walt Disney, Orson Welles, or Douglas Fairbanks linked to popular culture, participated in a complex and diverse network as part of the "Good Neighbor Tours" promoted by the U.S. government.

This article examines the role of Lincoln Kirstein as envoy of the North American Government to South America, with the open purpose of getting information about the situation of Nazism in the southern continent, overlapping under the strategy of the purchase of Latin American art for an exhibition in the MOMA.

KEYWORDS: *Good Neighbor Policy – Cultural Diplomacy – Nelson Rockefeller – Lincoln Kirstein – OCIAA.*

INTRODUCTION

Since 1940, some of the most important North American museums had participated in art exhibition tours and conferences. Due to that policy, Latin American art acquired greater relevance in the United States market. In that context, it was not only an issue of operating the "representational machinery of an informal empire," as Ricardo Salvatore calls it, but these trips involved damage control strategies over the action of Nazism in South America.

Despite these tours' visibility, some people were unnoticed in constructing the politics of good neighborliness, in some cases almost inexplicably, given the reputation they had in U.S. cultural circles. This article examines one of these personalities: Lincoln Kirstein, who came to Argentina twice. The first was with the American Caravan Ballet and the second as a MoMA consultant. At the time of traveling to South America in 1941, Kirstein was a recognized participant in the artistic New York scene, emerging as an influential patron of the American art circuit. The son of a wealthy

Jewish family established in Boston; he entered Harvard University in 1926, where he founded Hound & Horn magazine. Kirstein had literary ambitions and moved very comfortably in the circles of novice writers. The magazine published writings by T.S. Eliot, Gertrude Stein, and Katherine Ann Porter. Kirstein participated in creating the *Harvard Society for Contemporary Art*, a preliminary project for the founding of MOMA. In the thirties, he was responsible for bringing to the United States the Russian choreographer George Balanchine with whom he created the New York Ballet. Throughout his life, Kirstein made a significant contribution to understanding ballet as an art.

In 1940, he began working as a consultant to MoMA, creating a section of dance archives and helping to purchase some works of art. Kirstein considered the arts (and dance in particular) to have enormous political potential to establish links with other nations. This understanding became evident when in 1941, he would play two roles: advisor to MoMA and political contact and informant for Nelson Rockefeller in the OCIAA. In 1943, he enlisted in the Army and was recommended to service in the MFAA (the Monuments, Fine Arts, and Archives program) as assistant to Captain Robert Posey. Between 1944 and 1945, both found some of the masterpieces of European art that the Nazis had looted. One of the most prominent missions was discovering works of art of inestimable value, such as Michelangelo's Virgin of Bruges, Vermeer's Astronomer, Jan van Eyck's Ghent Altar, inside the salt mine in Althaussee, Austria.

The Good Neighbor Policy

In 1939, Nelson Rockefeller persuaded President Franklin Delano Roosevelt of the importance of the arts in diplomatic exchange. He sent him a detailed analysis of what needed to be done to improve the relationship with South America. Roosevelt decided to create the OCIAA.¹ Rockefeller, who had visited South America on occasions, focused the institution on precisely propaganda objectives. He used his connections to the art world and encouraged companies and various institutions to promote cultural exchange with Latin-American. The "Office" (as the OCIAA was called) recruited some of the best experts, artists, and intellectuals. It began to build a policy of cultural diplomacy to improve the image of the United States in the countries of the South. As Claire Fox has indicated, "it was against the spread of fascism in Latin America, but also for the promotion of trade and cultural relations." (2013, p52) Rockefeller knew that art was an effective vehicle for building a favorable opinion of the United States. His Office had a significant budget from the beginning, so an extensive program of activities was launched in which experts and artists participated. The formal goal was to persuade about the danger of the Axis and the need for brotherhood among the countries of the Americas.

There were severe reasons to develop these strategies of persuasion. While the Argentine government adopted neutrality, concerns remained in the U.S. government. Towards the beginning of World War II, some institutions played a significant role in organizing exhibitions in Latin America. MoMA, the Brooklyn Museum, and the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art were some of the most important. As an example of this interest, we can point out the New York World's Fair in 1939, where the U.S. government took the opportunity to promote cultural exchange with Latin America; as well as *the Latin American Fair* held in the Macy's department store, with an

1 First named OIAA (Office) of Inter America Affair) then OCIAA. Office of Inter-American Affairs, History of the Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs: Historical Reports on War Administration (Washington, DC: GPO, 1947).

exhibition of objects (fabrics, food, furniture) and artworks from important painters of the region were presented in highly unreasonable prices for the time. Among the Argentines were Horacio Butler, Emilio Pettoruti, and Antonio Berni.

In 1940, Nelson Rockefeller proposed to Lincoln Kirstein to prepare a six-month tour of the American Ballet through South America. Officially, they signed the contract in March 1941, with a budget of \$95,000. Kirstein knew that "traveling through South America was extremely difficult, with abrupt temperature changes, with very precarious installation conditions, with food and water in uncertain conditions," (Duberman: 2007, p142). In conclusion, he was aware of the enormous challenge. In June 1941, he flew to Brazil while his wife (Fidelma), George Balanchine, and the ballet company embarked on the ship *Argentina* to Rio de Janeiro. The project established representations in Brazil, Argentina, Chile, Peru, and Ecuador.

The trip was part of the "invasion" of American visitors in 1941 to the South American countries, particularly Brazil and Argentina. Anticipating the entry of the United States into the war, the government sent a variety of visitors, including a group of art specialists including Rene D'Haroncourt, Caroline Durieux, Grace Mc Cann Morley, and John Erskine, Alfred Barr. among others.

Experiences in Buenos Aires

The first stop was in Brazil. Kirstein found that the American ambassador, Jefferson Caffery, "was so hostile to the company that no representative of the embassy, not even of the lowest rank, went to any of the three parties that gave for us." (Kirstein, 1941) The ambassador expressed his negative opinion about the show in various areas, which made local circles not have much interest. A similar situation happened with the "Contemporary North American Painting" exhibition, consisting of 250 paintings curated by MoMA and other vital institutions. When Caroline Durieux, in charge of the South Section, arrived in Rio de Janeiro, she had several problems with Ambassador Caffery. Durieux informed Nelson Rockefeller that the exhibition was a triumph in advertising but not in politics: "from the political front we failed, because the embassy is not with us (...) is officially divorced from the exhibition, so the Brazilian government was not particularly interested." (Durieux, 1941). As a result of the skeptical position of the embassy, the exhibition had not a success, barely attended by 6571 visitors over three weeks, while in Buenos Aires, it would take more than 25,000 people. In the case of the Ballet Caravan, a paradox occurred since, despite the lack of support from the embassy, the Brazilian newspapers had given an excellent welcome to Lincoln Kirstein and choreographer George Balanchine.

In July 1941, the ensemble arrived in Buenos Aires to give nineteen performances in twelve days at the Politeama Theater. The arrival could not have been worse. At the same time, Kirstein had traveled by plane and the rest of the company by boat from Rio de Janeiro. Upon arrival at the port of Buenos Aires, all dancers under the age of eighteen were arrested for applying the law that prohibited the work of minors. Despite having the legal accreditations in order, they were not accepted by the Port Authority, who alleged that "minors were entering to prostitute them." (Kirstein, 1975, p.85). Kirstein wondered if it was not a pro-German-inspired plot. The event occurred on a Friday night; they did not get a federal judge to act throughout the weekend. The Argentina's minister of justice, who had been contacted, not intervened, so the dancers remained in jail until the first business day. The disastrous arrival worsened when the port authority retained all the company's luggage, which meant a significant delay in putting the show on the scene.

Even though the presentations had positive opinions from the press, Kirstein acknowledged that "Buenos Aires had been disastrous" due to the little interest of the public: "Buenos Aires was a considerable disappointment mainly because those who saw us told us that we were wonderful. However, no one believes that Americans can dance, paint, or do anything except sell. (Kirstein, 1941)." His frustration lay not only in the lack of an audience but also in the embassy not promoting them. For example, the American ambassador was absent at the opening, and no one official representative attended the show. From his point of view, the lack of success was explained by high ticket prices, a prejudice that Americans could not do classical dance, and the role the embassy had played by not openly supporting the performance.

While the American Ballet Caravan made its performances, the North American Contemporary Painting exhibition took place in Buenos Aires. The exhibition included works by Edward Hopper, Georgia O'Keeffe, Stuart Davis, and Thomas Hart Benton, among others. Caroline Durieux contacted some influential representatives of the arts at the local level. In his reports to the OCIAA, he wrote assessments of the situation in the country, giving his opinion about some people who needed to be considered to create a diplomatic link in the art world.

In Buenos Aires, both exhibitions (painting and dance) were presented coincidentally, but the results were different. In the case of painting, it had been a public success (not so in the sale of catalogs). The presentation of the Ballet Caravan did not have the same interest for the audience. In addition, it was presented in a theater usually used for cinema and varieties.

From his first trip to Argentina, Lincoln Kirstein relieved an extensive list of people in art and literature who should be considered to improve the presence of the United States in the country. All of them had a favorable opinion, although with some particularities. For example, the embassy had informed her that Victoria Ocampo (one of the most influential personalities in the field of literature) had a background with a strong influence on German and French art, so she detested the United States, but Kirstein had a conversation with her. He concluded that she had changed her mind. Victoria Ocampo showed enthusiasm about the performances, despite claiming that she should include more music by Stravinsky. As a result of their meetings, she introduced him to Jorge Luis Borges, who, to Kirstein's surprise, knew "everything about everyone, including us; and even knew our repertoire." (Kirstein;1975. P.86).

Kirstein also met María Rosa Oliver (with whom he maintained a friendship for several years, then secretary of Victoria Ocampo, close to the Communist Party). Rockefeller would hire the latter to work as a secretary in the OCIAA.

When Nelson Rockefeller planned Kirstein's second visit, the political and social information was beneficial. In this opportunity, Kirstein came to South America as a MoMA representative to acquire art pieces and increase the collection. Nelson Rockefeller had an important reason for making his return to South America. He had received information about the effectiveness of the Nazi propaganda apparatus. As Ronald Newton argues, by 1939, the German intelligence center (Abwehr) had carried out a series of tasks on the Argentine government, including establishing contacts within the Army. On the other hand, neutrality favored Germany in using the media, which provided opportunities to increase its presence. Until then, Brazil had been "the nerve center of Abwehr's intelligence reports in the Western hemisphere." (Newton:1992. P.250) However, new signals came from the Argentine government. In June 1941, the president appointed Enrique Ruiz Guiñazú, of clear pro-German orientation with solid connections to Vatican diplomacy, as

Argentina's foreign minister. He composed a diplomatic group whose purpose was to make Argentina the connecting nation between both blocs. Future peace treaties (with a victorious Axis) would be signed in Buenos Aires. Informed of these movements, Rockefeller decided to create groups of operations throughout Latin America, independent of the U.S. Embassy, and reported directly to him and not to the State Department, so he included Lincoln Kirstein to inform him of the political situation.

Even though the Argentine government was building a solid relationship with the Axis, the situation in the country was extraordinarily complex. Due to American political pressure, in 1941, the Argentine parliament put the Commission of Anti-Argentine Activities into operation, whose main objective was to investigate the influence of Nazism in the country. The German embassy funded many activities linked to institutions (schools, companies, media, social clubs) to encourage membership in the Nazi Party. The investigation's relevance was that the international media reported the Nazi penetration into the southern cone. In 1942, the allies denounced Argentina with increasing fury, maintaining that it tolerated German spies on Argentine soil, especially maritime intelligence: "the Allied spokesperson claimed that Argentina bore moral responsibility for many ship sinkings and many deaths, including many deaths those of women and women. children" (Newton, p.251).

In 1942, Lincoln Kirstein arrived in South America on a confidential trip. Among the reasons for this designation was his particular qualification "to carry out this mission because he is familiar with the countries he will visit." (Rockefeller, 1941). Finally, it was specified that the project was essential to the war effort and that he was the person most prepared to carry it out. The public purpose of the trip would be presented as to buy arts for the Latin American Exhibition in MoMA, covering the secret mission. Who would pay the expenses of the mission was controversial. In a letter to John Abbott, MoMA vice-president, he mentions his paradoxical situation "my project has been requested on behalf of the coordinator, and the museum is paying for me." (Kirstein, 1942). Rockefeller was convinced that the trip would be vital to the Office and the government. In order to make this project successful, Kirstein had to renew his relationship with the intellectuals he had met the previous year. In the opinion of the OCIAA coordinator: "the continuity of this relationship will have a propaganda interest and will be of assistance to our psychological struggle for war," (Lockwood, 1942) so that his mission as a cultural mediator was a priority. For Rockefeller, there was no conflict of interest between the government and MoMA; Kirstein would do his work for both institutions, although this might seem improper since the OCIAA was funding an artistic trip and MoMA a secret mission.

The envoy arrived for the second time in Buenos Aires in June 1942. On this occasion, he established a better relationship with some members of the U.S. Embassy, such as Secretary Edward Pierce Maffit and James Byrnes, a special assistant. The latter helped him establish political ties and gave him advice and accurate information about the situation in the country. He met Maria Rosa Oliver and they visited Spilimbergo's studio, where Kirstein was enthusiastic about the series of watercolors about scenes of the inadequate life. (Oliver: 2008, p. 100). He was primarily interested in figurative art among Latin American painters; his favorite was David Alfaro Siqueiros. For his similarity in style, he appreciated Horacio Butler's drawings and visited Butler's studio, and they discussed a project for the presentation of the Caravan Ballet the following year. In addition, he established a cordial relationship with Alfredo Guido, director of the Escuela Superior de Bellas Artes (Balneario) and contacted Raul Soldi, and Demetrio Urruchúa.

The acquisition of art pieces for the MoMA exhibition was the first step in a more ambitious agenda, which included expanding the collection of Latin American Art, funded by the Inter-American Fund, to promote cultural exchanges and expand U.S. influence in the region.

In general terms, Kirstein suggested two different and, at first glance, contradictory considerations about state of the art in Argentina. On the one hand, he was convinced that until artists "forget the School of Paris, they will not have autonomy. national art would not emerge if European influence were not rejected. Despite this opinion, some painters surprised him, as in the case of Antonio Berni², whom he defined as "the Argentine who most resembles the American of the time of the W.P. A³ And the fine arts section of the Treasury". (Kirstein, 1942a). The other artist who caught his attention was Demetrio Urruchúa, whose works were close to the muralist style. Kirstein considered him one of the best Latin American artists, "a very poor man who has been persecuted for his violent anti-Axis and pro-democratic position." (Kirstein, 1942a). In his final report, he asked for monetary aid for Urruchúa and Lino Spilimbergo, whom he saw as one of the best artists in Argentina.

INFLUENCES AND RESISTANCES

As a result of this double aim of his mission in South America, Lincoln Kirstein took notes of the artist's political position. From the aesthetic point of view, he tried to understand what kind of influence Argentinean art had. In general terms, Kirstein assumed that European aesthetic influence could be political. This way of understanding art and politics intertwined could have consequences when acquiring works. The most emblematic case was that of Emilio Pettoruti whom Kirstein considered a "furious fascist.

After she visited Buenos Aires, Caroline Durieux reported to Nelson Rockefeller that Pettoruti had an excellent abstract painting, but she had no clear what his political position was. Kirstein probably had more precise information about the painter's relationship with the conservative circles of Buenos Aires and knew the artist's special relationship with Margherita Sarfatti, friend and former lover of the Italian dictator Benito Mussolini.

The incident between Pettoruti and MoMA has been widely described in some articles by Fabiana Servidio. She analyzed the relationship between the artist and Grace Morley, envoy of the American government and director of the Museum of Modern Art in San Francisco. Servidio described the characteristics of Pettoruti's exhibition in San Francisco and the difficulties in placing his work at MoMA. (Servidio, 2012).

At the beginning of 1942, Emilio Pettoruti, director of the Buenos Aires Province Museum of Fine Arts to make an eight-month trip through the country. After the trip, while the MoMA Latin American Art Exhibition was being held in New York, he wrote an extensive letter to Alfred Barr, museum director. He complained about the poor representation of his works. He included a series of criticisms about the exhibition and – without mentioning it – the role of Lincoln Kirstein as a representative of that institution. The artist judged the choice of painters and the works included in the exhibition as inadequate. The American envoy had omitted "most of the representatives of our

² Berni had worked briefly with Siqueiros in Buenos Aires in 1934

³ Works Progress Administration.

art, chose academy students whom nobody knows and do not represent anything in our current environment," (Pettoruti, 1943). So he attached a list of artists that he recommended considering. The painter embarked on a series of criticisms about errors in the catalog and internal discussions of the world of the art elite in Argentina. He rejected Kirstein's mission by saying that he had been influenced by a small group, far from acting guided by the broad spirit of art. Pettoruti reacted against the inclusion of Berni's painting, saying that too much space had been given to a work that "here (in Buenos Aires) – for bad – was hanging in a waste room in the Salón Anual." (Pettoruti, 1943). The letter described an intriguing situation against him, carried out by a small local group that loathed him.⁴

Undoubtedly, the missive put Alfred Barr in an awkward position. The claiming letter from Pettoruti was a strategy to force getting a space to hang his works in New York. The museum director decided to respond to him openly, clearly expressing all the names to which Pettoruti had alluded. In his response, Barr argued the reasons why artists such as Norah Borges, Atilio Rossi, and Juan Ballester Peña had been included in the show; and also responded to the incorporation of the work of Antonio Berni, saying that "if the painter (Berni) is as bad as you say, why do you include him in the list he sends me?, and second why was he awarded the first prize of the National Salon a few weeks ago with the consequences known to all?". The most contentious issue was the political reports received about the painter. In his letter, Pettoruti sustained that "before I arrived at New York, you received information about me that does not adequate to the truth. These kinds of lies were picked up in Buenos Aires by an unscrupulous American." (CITA) Alfred Barr responded by going straight to the point:⁵ "Let me speak frankly," Barr said, "it is perfectly true that I heard a report about you that disturbed me. I immediately asked two other friends to confirm that information. The misunderstood was then based on the opinion of three people, not one in Buenos Aires doing some studies on the subject in Argentina". He alluded to opinions came from Caroline Durieux, Rene D' Harnoncourt, and Kirstein. One of the things that drew attention was the relationship between Pettoruti and Margherita Sarfatti, an art consultant intricately linked to the fascist regime in Italy. The friendship began in the twenties, during his stay in Italy. Sarfatti traveled to Buenos Aires in September 1930 to present the Italian Novecento Exhibition at the Association of Friends of Art, which Pettoruti curated. In 1940, she was exiled to Montevideo (having failed in her several attempts to emigrate to the United States). At the beginning of the forties, Pettoruti and other personalities of the cultural environment tried to help her enter the art circle in Buenos Aires. In a letter to Luis Pombo, referring to the Sarfatti's situation, Pettoruti recounts speaking with different personalities. However, they showed no signs of accepting her because of "that blessed fascism, the truth is that it is difficult to do things. In the magazine *El Hogar* also (I know very well) they will tell me: she is the great fascist" (Gutman, 2007, p. 90).

⁴ The identical prints he reproduces in his book *A Painter in front of the Mirror* where, for example, it relates that "Kirstein received at the embassy of his country. When the usher soundly threw my name, he pounced on me, expressing his surprise and pleasure to see me in Buenos Aires. It was fortunate that a couple of colleagues with whom he was talking were still present, and I replied: "But if this is where I live, a few meters from this embassy! How did it not occur to him to ask these two excellent friends for my signs? They both have my address and the phone number." The bewilderment that my clarification produced came to reveal to me that I had hit the nail on the head." *A Painter in front of the Mirror* (Buenos Aires, Solar, 2011), 279.

⁵ We assume that refers to Lincoln Kirstein.

In exchanging letters with Grace Morley, who insisted on presenting Pettoruti's works in New York, Barr knew the political motives surrounding a possible exhibition, avoided mentioning it and presented aesthetic reasons. Grace Morley insisted, and Barr and D'Hanoncourt looked for a space for a retrospective of his work, finally located in a prominent place but not very suitable, such as the National Academy of Design in New York, which did not have the prestige of MoMA. Kirstein maliciously commented about the exhibition to Alfredo Guido, saying he "knew it had been well installed in a beautiful and remote exhibition hall." (Kirstein, 1943).

Years after, Pettoruti insisted on his request before René D'Haroncourt in 1946; in a letter, he recalled the incident of 1943, saying that "a strange atmosphere was made around me and my work in the East of the country. A certain person who had been recommended to acquire a work of mine returned to New York without it." (Pettouriti, 1946).

Even with these controversies, Barr supported Lincoln Kirstein's position even though he openly refused to buy Pettoruti's works for political reasons. On the aesthetic side, both conferred poor value on his work, based on proximity to Juan Gris's painting, and agreed on the idea that it had an old-fashioned style. Kirstein argued that the painter had a technique within a school that, in his opinion, was at that time less important than in the previous twenty years.

Kirstein helped some artists' careers, such as Demetrio Urruchúa, who, due to his anti-fascist position, lost opportunities within the art environment in Argentina. Kirstein saw a parallel between politics and art in his painting, so he decided to make it possible for him to exhibit his work at MoMA.⁶ Although he appreciated the works of Horacio Butler, Alfredo Guido, or Lino Spilimbergo, Urruchúa was the one who most attracted his attention; Alfred Barr acknowledged this by saying that "Urruchúa was one of the discoveries you made." (1943).

Lincoln Kirstein made a calculated effort to create a selection of artists from Argentina that could represent the idea of modern art as he conceived it. He acquired pieces by painters and lithographers by spending money on works such as, for example, a painting by Butler (he paid five hundred dollars) or Raúl Soldi's work (one thousand dollars). (Barr, 1943).

During his stay in Buenos Aires, he made many contacts and often met with some American intellectuals such as Francis Taylor or the renewed writer Aldo Frank.

Despite his multiple activities, he was not comfortable in Buenos Aires. The one who comforted him was his friend George Balanchine, who worked very successfully at the Teatro Colón. In his letters, Kirstein rejected aspects of everyday life that he considered backwardness and criticized the absence of an original national vanguard. As he ironically recommended to Frances Hawkins (John Abbot's secretary and Martha Graham's commercial agent): "tell Martha never to come here: she would kill herself. (Kirstein, 1942). Alternatively, his comment to Alfred Barr upon his arrival: "This is a voice from the grave, in the distance a small note on plastic arts from a couple of South American neighbors." (Kirstein, 1942b). On the artistic side, he was uncomfortable with the Europeanizing atmosphere while disillusioned because there was no real awareness of American technical superiority in the Algerian Region. It bothered him because he believed that the United

⁶ Urruchúa would include one of his engravings in the Master Exhibition Prints, 1949. He participated in the painting exhibition of the IMA in Boston in 1944. In a letter to Eduardo Sacriste, Kirstein tells him that the work of Urruchúa was a success, and I arranged an exhibition in a private gallery. 1/12/1943. Lincoln Kirstein Correspondence and notes MoMA Archive, NY

States was not being valued at its right point. On the political side, some of his writings express their concern and disillusionment about the situation in South America: "this continent will never be safe with us. It is North America, but it sucks here" (Kirstein, 1942c). What outraged him at that time was the appointment of the new Argentine ambassadors in Rio de Janeiro and Lima who had a clear pro-Nazi orientation, convinced of the victory of the Nazis.

POLITICAL PERSPECTIVE

Although Kirstein aimed to promote mutual understanding and knowledge of American culture and art, his cultural perspective was that "they (Latinos) will never be like us. Although they will be closer to the extent that they innocently want their best exportable products: their art and their popular music" (Kirstein, 1942d). His conclusion on the differences between the two continents implies an ethnocentric position full of disappointment, the result of the construction of a "subaltern identity in terms of the dominant culture." (Salvatore:2006 p. 24). The only South American goods that could attract some interests were music and the arts. While the United States sought nature, exoticism, and originality, the most classic vision of Argentine art offered him a product that imitated European art or complete collections of European painting and sculpture.

His critical vision was not limited to the Latin American situation but also referred to U.S. policy for the region. In his opinion, the Good Neighbor policy was too simple because it was based on a quasi-innocent discourse. That was one of the reasons they could not penetrate Argentina, where the government was waiting for a complete German victory. In his opinion, the Nazis had indirect and specific propaganda, while the United States had none: "Our mistake is attributable to a certain lack of information." In a report to Nelson Rockefeller, he examined different strategies that could make propaganda more effective. His recommendation was to direct propaganda to different sectors: the landowners ("Los estancieros") and the growing industrial classes. The landlords were pro-fascist because they were terrified of communism. At the same time, the bourgeoisie did not have a significant political influence: "In a victory of the Axis, both classes are benefited. None need anything from us" (Kirstein, 1942e), so Argentina was more afraid of an Allied victory than a German one. From their point of view, the political propaganda had failed, but the situation could still be improved. Beyond his disappointments, Kirstein had a ridiculous plan to create a new policy. In a letter to Rockefeller, he argued that one of the best things they could do was "bring Indian children to America and send them back as leaders for their peoples... the museum will be, with luck and money, the first link in cultural relations." (Duberman:144). This was not a cultural encounter but rather the superiority of the United States that educated and trained the indigenous people of the other continent. As Ricardo Salvatore pointed out for the U.S. academics, in the first part of the twentieth century, modern America "was a mirror where South America could look at itself in order to understand its backwardness and weakness." (2016, p. 256).

After his long journey, Kirstein concluded that South American art was "in most cases more tributary than a source." (Kirstein, 1943a). Due to the subordination as tributaries (European culture), only a few artists had real significance. The absence of originality would prove the role that The United States was trying to play. From his point of view, the South American scene lacked prestigious artists. However, there were exceptions, such as Mexican artist David Alfaro Siqueiros whose mural in Chillán had made a deep impression on him. In his opinion, the murals were magnificent and challenging: "I think Siqueiros is the gran artist of the hemisphere occidental.

(Kirstein, 1942f). Subsequently, he asked the MoMA director to organize a solo exhibition for the artist, which finally did not occur because the U.S. government denied Siqueiros a visa.

When Kirstein returned to the United States, he was determined to do everything to help build the reputation of some South American artists. He actively worked in the creation of the Latin American Department at MoMA. The project included a plan for acquisitions, an art exhibition that took place in 1943, addition to the publication of the catalog that he made with some help from María Rosa Oliver, whom the OCIAA employed in Washington. He often consulted her to understand some reports and understand the political position of the artists. He acknowledged in a letter: "While there is something about painting, I find myself generally ignorant of the cultural background." (Kirstein, 1942g).

In 1943, he was summoned by the Army three months before the installation of the exhibition was finished, so the last steps were monitored by Dorothy Miller, the associate curator. The exhibition occupied the second floor of the museum. He acquired 195 pieces with money from the Inter American Fund and received twenty-nine works of art as a gift. Although Kirstein complained that the money was insufficient, the purchases exceeded expectations. Responsible for the growth of the Latin American collection, Alfred Barr focused on how the material could change the character of the museum's collection as a whole. The catalog noted that the collection was more complete than the European collection. In the case of Argentine artists, the exhibition included: Antonio Berni, Norah Borges, Horacio Butler, José Fioravanti, Raquel Forner, Alfredo Guido, Raul Soldi, Lino Spilimbergo, and Demetrio Urruchúa, among others.

At the Conference of Studies on Latin American Art in 1945, Barr argued that, although many people at MoMA were not specialists in Latin America (except Grace Morley) and had no knowledge of their art, they "entered the field with a spirit of discovery." (Barr, 1945). It is interesting to note that Kirstein's mission at the OCIAA served to bring South American art to an international stage, such as MoMA, where the works could be prestigious internationally. Collecting, evaluating, and classifying were part of the "exhibition complex" built by the U.S. government. (Bennett, 2017). Barr and Kirstein agreed that the most considerable number of works had to be acquired. However, they realized the importance of some painters already recognized as creators of national art of international relevance since the thirties. They were parts of the Latin American collection, such as Siqueiros, Kahlo, Rivera, Orozco, and Portinari.

In Kirstein's report, one of the conclusions was that American painting was "stronger, more vigorous and resurgent." (Barr, p.38). He also became convinced that the modern and national art was that of the United States. While South American painting was presented as historical, American artists represented true contemporary art. From the aesthetic point of view, the most significant limitation of Argentine painting was the European influence, although the envoy of the OCIAA kept specific hopes that a genuine national painting would be forged that escaped the classical typists: "I hope that for you an era of nationalism in art begins, which is not only pampa, gauchos but a study of its great city, of the life of the city (...). The North, the Nahuel Huapi, and the neighborhood of Recoleta in Buenos Aires, are full of personal charm and paintable motifs," he said in a letter to Alfredo Guido. (Kirstein, 1943b).

There is no doubt about the great interest that these experts and audiences had in Latin American art. In fact, MoMA's exhibition was initially planned for two months and was extended for another

month in the face of broad public interest. Later, between 1943 and 1944, it circulated throughout the country.

CONCLUSIONS:

In the network's organizations, Lincoln Kirstein (although he felt lost in a continent that he considered hateful and miserable) conducted two relevant tasks: a selection of art and a search for political information. The local context made him realize that, in Argentina, the policy of the good neighbor would need more than just acquiring works of art. It needed more efficient political propaganda and a control system in the diplomatic field.

At the end of World War II, he continued to be interested in Argentina's affairs. In his letters to Rockefeller, he was concerned about the penetration of fascism and did not hide his displeasure with the military government of Juan Domingo Perón. In 1945 he signed a protest note demanding that the United Nations expel Argentina for allowing the Nazis to take refuge. He argued that one should not have a friendly policy with that "dragon of that part of the hemisphere" (referring to Perón). (Kirstein, 1945). Meanwhile, as Secretary of State, his friend Nelson Rockefeller made arrangements to include the Argentine government in the United Nations Conference in San Francisco. For Kirstein recognizing the military government as legitimate was an orchestrated trick to maintaining the refuge route of Nazism.

If cultural diplomacy wanted to achieve Latin American countries recognized the leadership of the United States in the region, art was the perfect medium, considering the development of the circuits of consumption of cultural goods. However, some of the MoMA envoy's tasks in South America were more strategic.

Researchers on the OCIAA and the Good Neighbor policy in Argentina omitted or ignored Lincoln Kirstein and his influential role in providing political (as well as aesthetic) information about Nazism and pro-fascism from some members of Buenos Aires' cultural elites. Because he understood Rockefeller's role conferred on him, it had political relevance as much as artistic. On both trips to South America, he confirmed that fascism was a severe problem that threatened democratic values and that it had penetrated powerfully into the region. He successfully conducted the dual task of informing the U.S. government and selecting and collecting material for the MoMA sample.

Lincoln Kirstein was a complex personality, possessed a deep artistic knowledge, and had an excellent academic and cultural background. Throughout his experience on the continent, he had the sensibility to appreciate art and, at the same time, the acumen to create political ties of influence during the years of the Second War. While there was an ethnocentric aspect to his interpretation of South American art, a particular insolent aspect of his personality led him to sideline some of the traditional actors of the art circuit in Argentina and give his support to those who were linked to anti-fascist positions. His work as a consultant to MoMA served to place South American painting at the center of the international market scene, expanding the repertoire of artists linked to liberal values. In this aspect, even with a simplified vision, Kirstein demonstrated how art fulfilled a political role.

The experience of his travels in South America left a deep mark on him. He wrote a series of short texts under "Mission of the South, Portraits of Latin America," paying tribute to the style of Jorge

Luis Borges and Silvina Ocampo. In his reflections on these travels, Kirstein noted the similar condition of North and South America: "only because he is less known, loved, or hated less." Perhaps this expression summarized the contradictory aspects that he observed in that world in transition as Latin America was in the context of the Second World War.

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