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Roser Bru, Latin American Art, and the University

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Understanding the power of art to shape and guide debates on diversity, inclusion, and belonging at the university, this article takes as its point of departure a donation that centers critically acclaimed artist Roser Bru within a larger community conversation and educational endeavor. With an aim to speak to representation and democratic values, the authors analyze the overlapping thoughts and disconnects of three select stakeholders who have wrestled with what to hang on the university walls: a Donor, a Curator, and an Artist in Residence. Those interviewed represent distinct vantage points, each from a different constituency within and outside the university. This article unpacks an unexpected intellectual conundrum: At the University analyzed, current stakeholders guiding museum collections and selecting art for display on the walls seemed to challenge the representation of historically marginalized groups. Further, a generalized lack of understanding of matters beyond the borders of the United States makes it all the more challenging to speak to Roser Bru's paintings. Art can begin a conversation about belonging and human rights. These preliminary research findings suggest that a process engaging human subjects and their connections to cultural history can bring about reflection. This article ends with self-assessments by each of the authors, recognizing the unfinished nature of this work as part of a larger engagement on one's own campus and across universities.

Keywords: Latin American art, Roser Bru, campus arts engagement, democracy, diversity and inclusion

Al reconocer el poder del arte para formar y guiar debates sobre la diversidad, inclusión y pertenencia en la universidad, este artículo toma como punto de partida una donación que focaliza a la críticamente aclamada artista Roser Bru dentro de una conversación comunitaria más amplia y un esfuerzo educativo. Con el objetivo de hablar de la representación y los valores democráticos, las autoras analizan los pensamientos superpuestos y las desconexiones de tres

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figuras selectas interesadas que han luchado con la cuestión de qué poner en las paredes: un donante, un curador y un artista en residencia. Los entrevistados representan puntos de vista distintos, siendo cada uno de un sector distinto dentro y fuera de la universidad. Este artículo revela un enigma intelectual inesperado: ¿Cómo se puede hacer un reclamo artístico de subrepresentación si la diversidad y la inclusión están en un proceso de construcción? En la Universidad analizada, las figuras interesadas actuales que guían las colecciones de los museos y la selección del arte en las paredes parecían cuestionar la representación de los grupos históricamente marginados. Además, una falta generalizada de comprensión de los asuntos más allá de las fronteras de los Estados Unidos hace todavía más difícil responder a las pinturas de Roser Bru. El arte puede provocar una conversación sobre la pertenencia y los derechos humanos. Los hallazgos preliminares de nuestra investigación sugieren que un proceso que plantee ante los sujetos humanos sus relaciones con la historia cultural puede invitar a la reflexión. Este artículo termina con autoevaluaciones de cada una de las autoras que reconocen la naturaleza inacabada de este trabajo como parte de un compromiso más amplio en su propio recinto y en todas las universidades.

Palabras clave: arte latinoamericano, Roser Bru, arte en universidades, valores democráticos y el arte, diversidad e inclusión

To Roser Bru, whose art continues to inspire us

Within the framework of a global pandemic, this project commemorates a significant moment in underrepresented art, with political unrest and the role of women in society at its heart. Our focus is a set of five large paintings that were donated to a university's museum collection a decade ago but have yet to find a permanent place to be displayed. The subjects of these paintings represent a type of structural oppression not always displayed on the utilitarian walls of most colleges and universities. For the University in question, the challenge of exhibiting Latin American art has made visible an ongoing need for critical conversations on the freedom of expression as a human right. This article provides a possible point of departure from which to consider the power of art in unpacking privilege and addressing the terms of inclusion and belonging.

Since several universities in the United States have striven to contribute to the field of visual arts in ways that are more inclusive, the authors wish to elaborate a case study as it pertains to Latin American art on one particular campus, acknowledging that this concept represents a large world cultural region that in itself is diverse. To this end, the authors explored the ways in which curricular and extracurricular arts engagement by campus community members facilitate the reconsideration of long-neglected and self-referential artistic choices.

Of Museums and Methods

The intellectual and cultural frame for this discussion emerges from the "new museology," an ongoing and aspirational conversation. The examination of unsettling histories, generally excluded from art canons, and sensitivity to a representational community building process at the museum, which has tended not to engage disadvantaged communities, represent heavy emotional labor. As Janet Marstine reveals, the new museology implies "the transformation of the museum from a site of worship and awe to one of discourse and critical reflection... a museum that is transparent in its decision-making and willing to share power. New museum theory is about decolonizing, giving those represented control of their cultural heritage" (2006, 5). While theorists aim for prescribed outcomes, such framing does not always readily align with the processes in play at museums across the globe.

The new museology in Latin America arrived in Chile with a 1972 UNESCO-sponsored event still remembered as the "Mesa de Santiago." This roundtable brought together the region's cultural practitioners to reflect on "The Role of Latin American Museums," offering foci like democracy, community development, and economic empowerment. The development of local models and the idea of cultural patrimony—all evolving concepts—aspired to inclusive museum experiences and practices (Navajas Corral 2020, 130). One year later, however, much of the region entered a somber chapter of disappearances and state-sanctioned murders, making it almost impossible to develop the new museology (DeCarli 2003, 5). With the transition to democracy in the last few decades of the twentieth century, new historical and social understandings informed the repositioning of institutions that now grappled with issues like how to recover evidence, valorize multiple experiences amidst the fragments of memory, and represent the unspeakable. Unusual were studies of the multiple registers of meaning, or, as Ricardo Rubiales posed: "Does one arrive at an understanding of the concept of dictatorship by memorizing dates and biographies? What is it that the museum is supposed to contribute?"[1] (2018, 9). The new Latin American museology, scholars affirm, became a "response to the trauma of dictatorships, de-colonisation or extreme poverty" in a simultaneous quest for a just and equal society (Girault and Orellana Rivera 2020, 81). Interestingly, the most recent scholarship notes that assessments are rare and points to a general lack of Latin American women artists in museums (83).

Problematizing the aspirational nature of theory, Kevin Coffee centers the intersections of social forces and the points of inclusion and exclusion at the heart of the very existence of museums, which are formed by relationships, networks, and

[1] "¿Se comprende el concepto dictadura con el hecho de memorizar fechas y biografías? ¿Qué es lo que el museo aporta?" Our translations throughout, unless otherwise indicated.

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scripted rituals. Alerting scholars and practitioners that the complexity of such relationships can be reduced to mere box checking, he distinguishes between "cultural practices [that] emerge from and express ingenuity and diversity, [and] cultural stereotypes... artificial containers imposed on population groups that reflect and reproduce unequal socioeconomic relationships. . . . Stereotyping the 'others' is contemporary geo-political practice, with 'other' defined according to language, ancestry, skin tone, belief system, or geography" (2008, 265).

In "Redefining Curatorial Leadership," Marianna Pegno and Christine Brindza detail further the hierarchies that impede the process of enacting diversity and inclusion in museums. Logistics might have to prioritize what artwork is coming up while an exhibit is taken down. The presence of articles like this one show that curators have begun to wrestle with implementing a process that speaks to concerns raised by critical museum theorists. Scholars meanwhile have focused their attention on the results of such efforts, confining themselves to big data analyses that examine what art gets displayed in museums.

Using big data that has been crowdsourced and gathered over several years, one recent study elaborates on the dynamics of diversity and inclusion in eighteen major United States museums. The nine authors who analyzed this data find largely programmatic diversity efforts. Such approaches alone, they write, do not address adequately these areas of concern: the collections, which represent largely male and White artists; the museum staff, which is generally male at the level of director but female in terms of support staff; or the organization of visitors, which they find subject to gender and racial gaps (Topaz et al. 2019). The first data science approach to measure the genders, ethnicities, geographic origins, and birth decades of artists in museum collection reveals actual practices and priorities and yields interesting questions but ultimately falls short of engaging the complexities of diversity and inclusion. Beyond the sphere of art, our methodology assesses diversity and inclusion on a different scale and yields more complex nuances than a checklist approach to cultural authority.

Where, then, are university art museums in this conversation about theory and practice? Caught in the same tension between desired outcomes and ritualized process, universities serve different educational missions and constituencies, including alumni and current students. Scholarship that might engage the convergences and divergences of stakeholders and their vantage points in university art museums opens up a conundrum that often goes undocumented. Speaking specifically to the intersections between sculpture and architecture, a different context from the one this article opens, Dario Pedrabissi notes: "The literature specific to public art on college and university campuses is impoverished. Even more rare are research studies discussing the impacts of public art on campuses" (2015, 1). His

analysis finds little in the way of a path forward, leaving aside nonsculptural works altogether, perhaps because campus architecture would constitute an entirely different outcome and process. At the same time, Pedrabissi does not emphasize any one particular case study as a starting point. The conversation seems incomplete. As we have seen, theoretical framing tends to engage desired results but not process. Curatorial practice engages process but thoughts of how to engage community are usually not grounded in real data. The real data tends to forgo process entirely and relies on categorizing information in boxes one might easily crowdsource and check. As cocreators of knowledge at a university, we remain skeptical that the big data that looks only at the outcomes of such efforts can adequately capture the intended ethos to which new museology aspires. In this article, the new museology works itself out in the case of one university museum and a donation of five paintings.

Through interviews with a Donor, a Curator, and an Artist in Residence, this article analyzes the kinds of questions one might ask of any art collection. In this particular case, however, the human subjects of one liberal arts university in the southeast region of the United States were asked to engage one artist in particular. In order to maintain the confidentiality of the human subjects and their relationships to the university, the authors and their assistants adopted hidden identifiers in their protocols. This, of course, includes the titles and subject matter of the paintings in question. We hope that this will assist others in employing similar methods and expanding upon this research so that each institution of higher learning can encourage its community to speak openly and honestly about questions of representation and belonging that have long gone unspoken. For the purposes of this study, the particular liberal arts university will be referred to as "the University," a predominantly White and relatively small public liberal arts university with a current student body depicted as largely female and in-state. Its small museum's limited purview impacts the type of art displayed on walls throughout campus. Tourists visit throughout the year as students rush to class amidst sculptures of historic figures and lush landscapes.

In order not to reveal the identities of the people who offered assessments that ultimately became potentially sensitive answers, we have referred to them according to their roles only (the Donor, the Curator, and the Artist in Residence). Art exists in tension with its surroundings. In semipublic spaces like colleges and universities, which some consider their home for a time, art can speak to very different identities of diverse stakeholders. This article takes the case of difficult artwork, thought of as difficult precisely because it fails to speak to these varied constituencies.

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All interviews took place virtually in July and August 2020. The questions asked of interviewees included:

1. What is your relationship to Latin American art? What is your relationship to Roser Bru and her paintings?
2. What attracts you to the works of Roser Bru?
3. Why is it important that [the University has] these paintings? What does it mean to you that the works are here?
4. How are Roser Bru's paintings a part of a larger narrative of art?
5. Why do you think we should care about public art?
6. Is it important that underrepresented artists be showcased on a college or university campus? Why?
7. What is the process of donating art to an institution? What does it entail?

Additionally, room for open responses allowed interviewees to react and reflect on their positionality within their general considerations on diversity and inclusion in art.

Roser Bru, A Critically Acclaimed Artist

Roser Bru's work focuses on the intersection of gender, politics, and human rights. Born in Barcelona, Spain, in 1923, early in her life her family sought refuge in France from the dictatorship of Miguel Primo de Rivera. Bru's family returned to Spain in 1928 but once again sought exile at the end of the Spanish Civil War (1936–39) and the onset of the Second World War (1939–45). While at a French concentration camp for exiles, Roser Bru, along with her sister Montserrat, mother Josefa Llop and father Luis Bru and approximately 2,200 others, was selected to start a new life across the Atlantic (Bru 1989). Chilean diplomat and poet Pablo Neruda gathered donations to charter the *SS Winnipeg* for this voyage. "Let the critics erase all my poetry if they will. This poem I am recalling today will never be erased," he later wrote (1978/1983, 254). Neruda further remembered:

> By now, almost all my good nephews and nieces, pilgrims to an unknown land, were on board, and I was ready to rest from my long task, but my tribulations seemed never to end.
>
> The government of Chile, harassed and assailed, sent me a message: "NEWS SOURCES CLAIM YOU ARE FACILITATING MASSIVE IMMIGRATION OF SPANIARDS. REQUEST DENY INFORMATION OR CANCEL VOYAGE ÉMIGRÉS."

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> What should I do?
>
> One solution: Summon the press, show them the ship crammed with two thousand Spaniards, read the telegram in a solemn voice and immediately fire a shot into my temple.
>
> Another solution: Board the ship with my émigrés and disembark in Chile, for the cause or for poetry. (252)

As Ariel Dorfman describes: "Awaiting the penniless survivors of Franco's legions was President Aguirre Cerda's personal representative—his health minister, a young doctor named Salvador Allende" (2018, 10), who would become the central figure in the next dictatorial regime that Bru, her family, and fellow passengers would face. After settling in Santiago, Chile, Bru worked in the mornings and studied at the School of Fine Arts in the afternoons, beginning with lithography and moving later to painting (Vidal 1990, 248). As a lifelong friend of Neruda and others, she collaborated as an illustrator of literary works, including etchings for odes by Neruda commissioned to celebrate poetry and life.

In her essay "Poetics of Resistance," Andrea Giunta writes that Salvador Allende's election to the presidency of Chile in 1970 represented "a turn of events that was as exceptional as it was hopeful," marking:

> the possibility of a transition to socialism by a democratic means in a peaceful revolution… But those ideals were not embraced by the entire society. The military coup on September 11, 1973, put an end to the socialist government. Like thousands of others in Uruguay and Argentina, many left the country in a process of exile that divided society in two. Those who stayed in Chile were surrounded by violence and repression, facing imprisonment and torture, and those forced to leave Chile had to deal with the uprootedness that exile entailed. (2017, 251)

For Roser Bru, this moment represented an all too familiar ghost. Working within artist collectives like Taller 99 and grieving the murders and disappearances of friends, she reckoned all the more with her heritage and the meaning of human rights. As she later explained: "Death and memory are preoccupations that become obsessions in my works of art" (cited in Agosín 1989, 87).

Chilean policy on culture after 1973 encompassed the removal of artists from key positions. Shifra Goldman mentions Roser Bru as one of several targeted artists at this time (1994, 256). The attempt to erase Bru from the history of Latin American art has only recently become the subject of scholarly and critical integration.[2] This

[2] For more information about Bru's art, see the artist's official website at https://roserbru.cl

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neglect belies the power of her work. Chilean artist and author Diamela Eltit notes: "Roser Bru is a complete artist. Her decisive work has been woven by her own aesthetic, reflexive, solitary hand. By her body" (2000, 153).[3] Driven by lived experience, Bru's intense subject matters reimagine art masterpieces, evoke disappearance and exile, and represent maternities and the grace of life. One might put her work in the context of Latin American neofiguration, but recent surveys exclude the centrality of her influences despite the intense dialogue with artistic universals and political legacies (Barnitz and Frank 2015). Annemieke van de Pas points specifically to the "indignation and depression caused by the omnipresence of death—the darkest and most enigmatic side of life itself—and the cruelty of the dictatorial political systems that she experienced both in Catalunya and in Chile and which caused indelible effects" (2006).[4] An exhibit in 2006 evoked these spaces with the lyrics of a popular song: "One life, two lives, / How many lives do you have? / You have my whole life / And the life of us both."[5] Cecilia Fajardo-Hill and Andrea Giunta frame Bru's work within the paradigm of radical Latin American women artists who have been "marginalized and hidden by dominant, canonical, and patriarchal art history" (2017, 17). Whether the critics use detailed or general brushstrokes, Bru's serious visual vocabulary is undeniable. Her forceful critique of dictatorship and overt nationality, in particular drawing attention to the liminal status of women, has ironically been one of the main reasons she has been excluded from canons that celebrate the art of nations.

Roser Bru's works, which repeatedly accentuate the struggle of loss and the pain that accompanies death, also interweave other iconographies. For example, Bru equates the loss of a person disappeared by the Chilean or Spanish government to biblical scenes of crucifixion and to prominent victims of state-sponsored violence such as Anne Frank. These choices make her works universal to all who recognize the devastation of human rights abuses. Alongside her pieces that are deemed controversial, some of Bru's still life paintings evoke the beauty of life. The symbol of melon fruit, for example, is often used to gesture to feminist ideals of childbirth's beauty or the elegant female body in a nonthreatening and overt manner. Both Bru's simple and more controversial motifs speak to the Chilean context.

[3] Diamela Eltit writes: "Roser Bru es una artista completa. Su obra gravitante ha sido tejida por su propia estética, reflexiva, solitaria mano. Por su cuerpo" (2000, 153).

[4] Annemieke van de Pas explains Bru's art in terms of her "indignación y depresión ocasionados por la omnipresencia de la muerte —el lado más oscuro y enigmático de la misma vida— y la crueldad de los sistemas políticos dictatoriales que vivió tanto en Cataluña como en Chile y que causaron unos efectos imborrables" (2006).

[5] The exhibit, titled "Roser Bru: dues vides. dos vidas" and sponsored by the Generalitat de Catalunya in the Palau Moja, recalled: "Una vida, dues vides, / Quantes vides teniu vós? / Vós teniu la meva vida / I la vida de tots dos."

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The Artist in Residence consulted during this project stated that Bru's work possesses "a directness in her creation," or a kind of simplicity: "A simplicity not lacking complexity. A simplicity in terms of making a statement and not overstating it. And that's a power." This power corresponds with color choices the artist renders consistently, usually without mixing. He continued:

> Colors and color fields, flat color fields, there's not a lot of blending and so forth, and not a lot of subtlety of form, or, it's not that look of what you see in a lot of European art, especially in her time period, where you would see the representational form of the figure, where you see all the subtleties and nuances and the light reflecting off the surface of the skin, or eyelashes, no, she's cut through that. And she's reduced it and gave you more of a simplicity of the figure, or the essence of the figure, to get her statement across… And I think it's evident that she has that kind of skill that she can draw and make that work.

In her printmaking, drawings, and paintings, "it really boils back down to the artist's interest, and what aesthetically is appealing to the artist, personally, in terms of a mark," explained the Artist in Residence. Bru's characteristic marks and lines, along with her sense of space, color, and simplicity would likely not pose controversy. What might create controversy, then, would be the fact that these paintings somehow do not "fit" the aesthetic currently displayed on the University walls.

Timothy Luke suggests that art exhibitions can stage "elaborate and expensive works of educational theater with their own special rhetorical agendas and peculiar political teachings" (1992, 1). At the University, this seems to be the case. Artistic works typically adorning the walls feature trees, flowers, and student art. It appeared to the authors that the point of art at the University was to have it blend into the background in a nonthreatening and noncontroversial manner. The University offers limited spaces for student engagement with art, at least compared to the numerous poster size photographs of iconic campus images. Certainly, art slides in classes or artistic objects woven into curricular missions might challenge this lack of controversy, but the authors could not ascertain this with our limited time to observe. The museum's collection, on the other hand, with advertised exhibits that patrons would attend only if they chose to, potentially invited more controversy. In fact, its directors often sought that in their exhibitions on slavery, native peoples, marginalized women, and immigration. This spatial expression of challenge reproduces the terms of domination, echoing Luke's notion that "gaining control over art's symbolic codes is an important form of power. Securing command over the definition, application and interpretation of these aesthetic codes becomes a source of conflict during today's increasingly frequent struggles over the anesthetization of everyday life" (1992, 2).

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Arlene Dávila writes about the institutional challenges to more equitable and inclusive environments. Dávila describes the politics of art as slow and conservative processes. For example, inclusive landscapes may not ultimately be spaces patrons wish to visit. However, arts and cultural institutions can risk losing funding if not speaking directly to diversity (2020, viii). Thinking about these dynamics at the University, it appeared that the process of acquiring art engaged diversity for diversity's sake. Following decades of stagnation, the donations and acquisitions process has recently been updated to involve more community voices. A committee arranged around this goal follows policies and practices that assess whether donations and acquisitions fit a set of criteria and, increasingly, a cultivation of underrepresented artists (Association of American Art Museum Curators 2020). The curatorial staff is small in size relative to more expansive or city museums; however, curators are aided by collaborations with experts in different disciplinary majors and sectors in their attempts to speak to all University stakeholders.

Having interviewed subjects who would offer three different vantage points—evoking human stories tied to the work of Roser Bru—it became evident that questions related to the artist's work and the placement of Latin American art in general spoke to larger narratives of belonging, diversity and inclusion, and democratic values at the University.

The Donor

The Donor, whose family knew Roser Bru personally over generations, began collecting paintings by the artist while a child and art more seriously in his twenties. Because most collectors were unlikely to take risks in the 1980s, when the Donor's collection became a serious pursuit, Latin American art was often an unknown entity in the United States even though artists like Bru were widely known in Spain and Latin America. Military dictatorships during the second half of the twentieth century led many exiles, like the Donor, to collect art that documented the significant role of creative expressions against authoritarianism. The Donor remembered that at the time of the military assault on democracy in Chile (1973–1990): "there were a number of artists that were being disappeared for speaking out against the government. So no one really knew what was going to happen with Roser but as it turned out the military dictatorship just didn't know what to do with her because of the fact that she was Spanish." The art world, too, seemed not to understand how to classify Bru's role in and response to modern art canons, which is what compelled the Donor to collect this art all the more: "Basically I purchased maybe one or two pieces a year of her work. And a lot of the pieces have been shown in Spain as well as the United States…." He then decided to store these paintings throughout his house.

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For the Donor, collecting art became a way to piece together and understand more fully the terms of dictatorship, exile, and the social fabric of democracy. He explained at length the social fractures that Roser Bru and artists of her generation encountered and protested after the military coup that overthrew Salvador Allende, the democratically elected president of Chile, and brutally repressed the people in one of Latin America's oldest democracies. Representations of injustices, a universal in the art of human rights, were censored and considered dangerous for their creators and viewers. Women artists, in particular, represented maternity and female suffering further compounded by governmental violent paternalism. Several of the Donor's friends traveled to meet relatives of those depicted in paintings and found themselves no longer able to affix these images to their walls for the trauma they evoked, and in one of these cases, the Donor acquired such a painting and remembered: "It got to the point that I could not look… any longer… It was just too much suffering… I would walk around the house, and all I would see is this suffering." The Donor decided to give these paintings to the University, as if to share a collective burden the viewer must assume with the art of human rights.

The Donor conscientiously explained the art of collecting, which goes beyond cultural and historical significance into color, form, and texture: "If you take a look at how [Bru] paints, she really throws on a lot of paint and this . . . has texture associated with it. If you run your hand on it, you can almost get a tactile feeling of the actual painting and how she . . . developed it." The Donor remembered that Bru encouraged this tactile and interactive relationship to painting and pondered the urgency of the materials at play: "I'm not sure if this is actually correct but… because she paints with acrylic and the fact that it dries very quickly when she throws on a lot of paint, it is much easier to get a feel for it."

The Donor's gesture to his alma mater, which one would have expected to represent a welcome donation to the University, was met largely with silence. The art "kind of just sat there for years," he said. Given the historical and cultural significance of the donation, this silence was perplexing and rather frustrating. Understanding that democracy itself can be fragile—"you know it's not a given [that] democratic governments are going to succeed, right?"—the hope that the University would give space and voice to the global plethora of human experiences seemed all the more vital: "The United States is pretty unique . . . in terms of the people continuing to vote, for having a democratic government. But if you take a look at . . . what's going on over the course of the last year or the last couple of years…, it's a continued erosion of civil liberties." Remembering how quickly Chile had lost its democracy and entered into military dictatorship, the Donor turned to the present: "It's not so unusual to think… we could lose that… I think that it's important… in every form to be reminded of the struggle… of maintaining civil liberties."

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As institutions of higher education continue their reckoning with the terms of traumatic legacies and the path to diversity and inclusion, the Donor believed that Latin American art remains central to the mission of representation and the expansion of democratic values. "The main question was: Would I be participating in a culture of United States-based museums… hoarding art?" This coupled with his undergraduate experience of seeing "a bunch of old White men" on the walls or as statues in the lush green landscape made the Donor determined to complicate the narrative through an arts initiative. While Bru's art can today be seen at museums of international repute, the University still struggles with exhibiting these works. While the paintings are certified and ready to be displayed, they have often been moved from place to place, some more prominent than others, but only as part of individualized curricular efforts. "When I donated art to [the University], the express view from the folks [there] was that they were going to show [these paintings]… It took a little bit… I really didn't care where they were put up… I just wanted for people to be able to see them."

The Curator

The Curator began by disclosing the statistical significance of the collection's lack of representation: "In terms of Latin American art I would say it's less than one percent in a collection of around six thousand works, so we have a lot of work to do in this area." With a somewhat hesitant tone and aware that such a disparity might represent a weak commitment to change, she noted a definitive gender gap: "We definitely . . . have a gap in women artists, very underrepresented in our collection as well," she said. It is clear that the Curator viewed these discrepancies as problematic, for it was "very important to have representation, inclusive representation, in a public art program around campus." In fact, much of the conversation highlighted the Curator's awareness of and insistence on the importance of such diversity: "When you drive into any town, you've got your Starbucks, your Panera, your Target. Almost every town these days looks the same, and so in my mind, public art is a way of expressing community and individualism, and you know, just all kinds of modes of expression and ways people think—just to break out of that sort of corporate art and corporate feeling of America." The Curator was adamant that art "can help to start dialog and, yeah, it's just kind of breaking out of the everyday… But also it can help people feel connected to their community, with representation."

The Curator believed it important to increase the representation of artworks to match the lived experiences of the campus community and, in particular, the student body. "Society looks a lot different now. We're not a completely homogenous group of people... There's so much work we have to do in terms of learning from each other

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and having conversations." Despite this awareness at the University, the Curator offered little explanation as to why such diversity in art was not more apparent. As she pointed out, the museum itself "needs to support the curriculum of the University, but we also are an art museum for the region. So we have to kind of work in those two worlds, but . . . museums generally speaking have a strategic plan for how to grow their collections. As a university museum . . . our collection has grown primarily from gifts." For expansion of any given collection, the Curator put the response and even responsibility onto the community's ability to become potential contributors.

Although many of the Curator's thoughts were about diversity in general, she noted Bru's modern take on political issues as especially imperative: "It's teaching about the politics, and definitely women's struggles. She seems to have a very full message in most of her paintings. They're not necessarily just pretty or art for art's sake. They're multifaceted." Contemporary and modern art, which can tell a culturally relevant story, does not always cater to one specific audience. Bru's works, the Curator acknowledged, seemed to provide an important lens through which to contemplate the art of difference, not to mention the challenges of including Latin American and women's art in the University's permanent collection in general. In contrast to the Donor's deep historical knowledge and appreciation for Bru's artistic commentaries on political repression, the Curator found her work valuable solely because the artist was a member of an underrepresented group.

The Artist in Residence

The Artist in Residence, hired by the University to foster diversity and inclusion in arts engagement, began the interview with an explanation of the intersectionality of race and ethnicity in art. The Artist quickly drew parallels between the thematic concerns of Latin American and African American artists, believing that their art was "going through a similar kind of chrysalis" in charged explorations of the conquest and the struggle for equality, among other themes: "A fight for peace. You will see a push for justice, and social justice, and those kinds of things. And artists utilize their voice within the artistic realm… I definitely think that would be my intersection point… not from an ethnic standpoint but from an ethnic connection. Across the lines."

The Artist knew the Donor's story and spoke about the need for others to share and donate art based on their lived experiences. The Donor, like Bru, had experienced the plight of the exiled person, coming through "an oppressive part of history." The Artist remembered the Donor's story in detail: "He flees to another place, comes to America, and then ends up at [the University]. And one thing that was so profound about it is that he finds a freedom of expression within a space where . . . voice is not being stultified, or stopped, or oppressed, and that was very key. And then… years forward, to collect art and then to give that to [the University] as a gift," he

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continued, represented the Donor giving "something back to an institution that gave him so much" and "further tells and teaches us about him and his culture, what he has been through." The Artist believed that the University needed more of those kinds of reflective gifts, adding: "How many different places and different countries, and different representations of people come from all around the world, that come to [the University], and think of what they give to the institution!"

Despite the fact that the University caters to all people, the Artist still noted the need for change to bring its community closer. "I think it's so important for… people who come to this space to… find these tracks of familiarity. And I think it creates a greater sense of community. It creates a greater sense of a home away from home. It creates a deeper sense of understanding of the global connections but also the global differences." The Artist explained that the differences were not in opposition but rather indicative of "different cultural traditions." He said: "That's I think what makes us rich, that's what makes an institution like [the University] rich, or any institution for that matter."

One issue raised by the Artist was the University as a public space where all can visit versus its role as a second home, which betrays a more private need to honor those who live and have lived there. The Artist explained that an artwork's subject matter often plays a significant role,

> in terms of how that piece gets represented and will be represented. Because not only are you dealing with the… issue of… a public institutional space, you have a space that may have various different age levels or age brackets coming in… and then you play on a tricky slope of putting work out that representationally could be offensive, and that one's a hard one to even get away from because almost anything could be offensive in terms of this representation, simply the artist themselves could be offensive.

Here, the Artist in Residence spoke to art at the University in general and, as a result, shed light on an implicit distinction that has perhaps silenced and even censored work that a few or some might deem controversial in its representation. In other words, the museum's collection would assume a self-selected audience whereas art displayed on University walls more generally has to account for a far wider, yet perhaps not as broad-minded, audience.

Conclusions

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Under the Nixon administration, the United States definitely had a role in unsettling democracy by assisting the coup d'état in Chile. The Donor migrated with his family to the United States in search of safety and security. Collecting the paintings by Roser Bru gave new meaning to his journey. Because the Curator and Artist in Residence did not know about the cultural history these paintings represented, there might not be any way for a spectator to engage them meaningfully without their contexts either. While thinking through the terms of diversity and inclusion within the new museology, cultural tools help us analyze what we mean when deciphering the layers of meaning and human experiences. Superficial multiculturalism does not bring us closer to the terms of systemic change. We started out with the idea that this might be an article based on the transnational dimensions of Roser Bru's art and its cultural power. While these were indeed topics manifested in the interviews conducted, the subtleties that emerge show that the reality is more complex.

The Donor, who recognized the disturbing contexts within which Roser Bru completed her paintings, believed the University would want to share facets of a larger story on the devastating impact of dictatorship and hatred, the great failures of humanity. However, the University seemed unready to make this commitment. The University lacked spaces in which to value that knowledge and create community in order to acknowledge critical conversations about Chilean history, the coup, and United States involvement in this overthrow of democracy. The Curator and Artist in Residence seemed to know too little about the history of Chile or Spain to say anything meaningful about these paintings. In the absence of any specific knowledge of Bru and her context, they reduced the impact of her paintings to that of the contribution of a Latin American woman.

The fact that Bru's work has been purchased and exhibited around the world, including in such auspicious spaces as the National Fine Arts Museum of Chile, the Queen Sofía National Museum Art Center in Spain, and the Museum of Modern Art in the United States, speaks to the esteem in which other curators and fellow artists hold her work. It is revealing, then, that the Curator and Artist in Residence, two people who might be expected to have knowledge and understanding of the importance of such a gift, seemed to approach Roser Bru's work not as that of an individual but as a representative of a biographical category. If these are the people the University tasks with evaluating its art collections, or if the process of selection begins with identity politics, then the terms of diversity, inclusion, and any sense of belonging are going to be hopelessly narrow. As the brief biographical summary of Roser Bru demonstrates, her life and art transcend boundaries with their internationalism and universal themes.

Curation and artistic representation did not seem to be related to the University seeking challenge. In fact, it appeared that the University's answer was to shrink

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from the challenge entirely. This might be a safe answer but would not seem to be an adequate one. As the Artist in Residence suggests, surely there must be landscape changes in play that are multicultural and completely unchallenging. It appears as if the University has at times conflated controversy with a kind of multiculturalism that indicts the very history that the University had been a part of and proud of for so long.

In many ways, this narrative about five paintings donated to represent Latin American art on the University's walls is a story about diversity delayed, by almost ten years to be exact. The University, like most others, has access to at least one faculty member who can assess the cultural history behind Roser Bru's work. If not able to presume the value and significance of the donation, then perhaps there are willful disconnects that have traditionally informed the campus's promotion of a sense of belonging. When handed an opportunity, diversity and inclusion seemed grounded in a kind of superficial multiculturalism, with little interest in honoring and valuing the gift.

New museologies focused on changing the process of display would seem to invite the Other into sustained conversations. In centering the human subject within such methodologies, this article has aimed to engage three vantage points that might replicate themselves differently outside the University. With the use of hidden identifiers, it was not possible to interview more subjects. One might imagine, though, that the interaction with additional human subjects would likely produce new and meaningful terms of engagement, achieving a facet of diversity and inclusion that would otherwise remain in the realm of the underrepresented and unheard.

Self-Reflections

One coauthor is an undergraduate student, and the other is a professor. We have the roles of insiders on a campus, even if we are describing a different campus. It is quite possible that the interview questions betrayed our status as insiders. Since we all had a seat at the table as representatives of a university studying another university, this inevitably shaped how we analyzed, studied, thought about, prepared, and approached the kinds of questions we considered relevant and interesting. In other words, this study was not value-free.

Haley R. Conde

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With this engaged research, I learned how different vantage points fit together by giving us a sense of corresponding beliefs and perspectives. If you do not have people like the Donor, the Curator, and the Artist in Residence contemplating these matters, then you do not have change. There is an importance to issues involving art because it is one of those things that does not change unless people think about it inclusively, kind of like diversity itself.

As a student, my coursework typically concentrated on a more traditional canon of both Art History and Hispanic Studies. Research experiences such as these form opportunities to explore intersectionality and how it manifests itself in real-time decisions, including how it impacts decisions about art placement on university walls. As someone who is entering the field of creative industries, understanding how these decisions compose themselves is critical for discussions and contemplation of future art collections.

Regina A. Root

On our own campus, we are asking the same questions about what to put up on the walls. As in many places, our collections are challenged for not representing the diversity of the human experience. Scholarly expertise can guide decisions, but deep, collectively-owned knowledge about spaces and the art and people it includes, takes a very long time to assemble thoughtfully. A community-style discussion often involves the search for common ground. One would not think it hard to place art on the walls, but the debate about who owns part or all of a building and who at all levels must approve what everyone will experience is an ever-changing landscape. Perhaps as an insider, I value the type of research into arts and cultural engagement that we can make happen on a campus, because it has the potential to involve all stakeholders in a more diverse and inclusive conversation.

Art can be at the end point of lots of decisions. As an insider who is privy to conversations at a university, and guided by my work in the creative industries, it sometimes seems like the goal of increasing art donations takes privilege over acquisitions, which then take much exploration and time to evaluate. Universities are, in fact, embedded in larger structures that can include appraisers, conservators, and producers. This in itself shapes and guides collections. The structural knowledge and personal insight I bring to this project has been the result of sustained scholarly attention, leaving the door open for others to understand more fully, document experiences, and enact the changes on the wall.

Postscript

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As we finished writing this article, Roser Bru passed away at the age of 98. As Francisco Brugnoli, former director of the Museum of Contemporary Art in Santiago, reminds us, Roser Bru's spirit remains with us, as her life and work do not exist only in our memory (2021).

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Research Note

This project uses hidden identifiers and data that has been approved by the William & Mary Protection of Human Subjects Committee. Because interviewees were promised confidentiality and anonymity, the paintings they described are not titled or represented here. The recordings of the interviews are not available for other researchers.

Interviews

The Artist in Residence. Interview conducted by Isabel Delaney. July 10, 2020.
The Curator. Interview conducted by Haley R. Conde. August 11, 2020.
The Donor. Interview conducted by Elena Calderone. July 17, 2020.

Regina A. Root is an international expert whose scholarship is far-ranging in the areas of art, design, and culture. She is the author or coauthor of *The Latin American Fashion Reader*, *Couture and Consensus*, *The Handbook of Fashion Studies*, and *Pasado de Moda*, among others. Root's current work centers around cultural appropriations in art, textiles and design, and the Latin American creative industries

at large. She is a past president of the Middle Atlantic Council of Latin American Studies.

Haley R. Conde is a scholar at William & Mary. Her work has led to change on her own campus, such as her membership in the Muscarelle Museum of Art's Acquisitions Advisory Committee. Her interest in the field of intersectionality, education, and accessibility in the arts relates to curation and diversity interests more broadly. She is a member of the Middle Atlantic Council of Latin American Studies and the Association of Academic Museums & Galleries. She is pursuing a career in arts research.

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