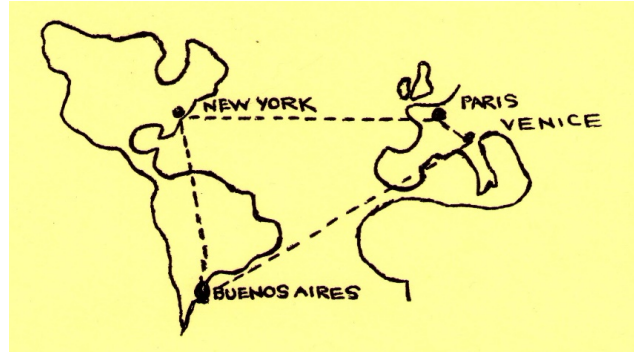


**ABSTRACT:**

**Arte flotante – Strategies of Mobility in the Art of Argentina between 1950 and 1970**



*Exposición flotante*, Barco Yapeyú (Museo de Arte Moderno de Buenos Aires), 1956.



Nicolas García Urriburu, *Intercontinental Project of Waters Environment*, poster, 1970 (detail).

In my PhD project, I investigate mobility strategies related to art history in Argentina from 1950 to 1970. Processes of national and continental crossing of borders, the encounters that result from these practices and the effects they have on the reception and production of art are at the center of my analysis, which I outline on three different levels.

(1) On the level of art institutions, I amend the history of exhibitions by collecting data on the floating museum (“*exposición flotante*”). (2) On the level of the actors of the art scene, I reveal interdependencies between local art production and global art criticism by using case studies of internationally traveling art critics. (3) On the level of the artwork itself, I analyze the art-theoretical discourse on *Site Specificity* (Kwon 1997 et. al) and update it with the term *arte flotante*.

**(1) *exposición flotante* – the floating exhibition**

At the center of my interest lies the floating museum of Argentina, the *exposición flotante*. The *Museo de Arte Moderno de Buenos Aires*, founded in 1956, only had a fixed location in 1960. In the founding year, a ship was used as a museum. Under the lead of the director Rafael Squirru, the „Barco Yapeyú“ navigated to several harbors of the American south coast up to Rio de Janeiro, South Africa, Asia and the east coast of North America with the purpose of presenting Argentinian Art to a broader, international public. (Giunta 2007, 76f). The phenomenon of the mobile exhibitions has been treated as a marginal topic in exhibition history so far. (Altshuler 2008/2013, Hegewisch/Klüser

1991, Greenberg/Ferguson/Nairne 1996, Stoelting 2000). Taking the *exposición flotante* as a starting point, I will search for internationally comparable examples.

The essential research questions are factual and concern the specific dates, infrastructure and destinations of the „Barco Yapeyú”.

- Which artists and works were represented on the ship and how were they chosen?  
Has this lead to a canonical reception?

- What was the criteria for the route of the floating museum and its destinations?

Furthermore, the example of the floating museum discusses the impact of mobile exhibition formats on the “internationalization” or “globalization” of art:

- How does the strategy of “visualization” respectively “internationalization” of Argentinian Art work?

- Are there any comparable examples of mobile and/or “swimming” museums internationally?

- What are the effects of mobile exhibition formats for the reception of the exhibited art?

## ***(2) Travelling art critics***

Based on individual case studies of internationally traveling art critics, I will analyze the interdependency of local art production and global art criticism. Since the 1960’s, internationally renowned art critics had been traveling to Argentina for the annual prize exhibition that was held at the Instituto Torcuato Di Tella at the *Centro de Artes Visuales (CAV)* in Buenos Aires, starting in 1963. Thus, the director of *CAV* and Argentinian art critic Jorge Romero Brest, invited Clement Greenberg (USA) and Pierre Restany (France) to Argentina in 1964 to be jury members. Lucy R. Lippard (USA) was a jurywoman in Buenos Aires in 1967. The reviews and reports of these art critics shed light on the art production of that time, drawing comparisons with current tendencies in the international context or assigning the works of Argentinian artists to already existing trends. The international travel experience of the art critics in turn was shaping their notion of contemporary art. A reciprocal relationship between internationalization of local art and global art criticism can be detected. Moreover, large-scale exhibitions like biennials become more important as platforms of the international exchange. The impact this development has on art criticism and its protagonists must come under scrutiny.

- What is the importance of nationality, local characteristics and the place of artistic production in the reviews of internationally working art critics?
- How do these reviews affect cultural policy in terms of awarding prize money, travel grants or nominations for international large-scale exhibitions?
- What do these reviews reveal about the network, relationships and bonds of the Argentinian art scene with an international reference field?
- Can the geographical movement be understood as a moment of innovation of art criticism?

### ***(3) Arte flotante***

On the level of the artwork, the art-theoretical discourse on “fluid forms” of *Site Specificity* (Kwon 1997) is going to be analyzed, focusing on documentations of ephemeral art works. I use the term “arte flotante” to typify an artform that manifest itself in the 1960’s and that, on the one hand, appropriates the idea of site specificity conceptually, but on the other hand leads to the production of artworks that can be repeated in different places at different times. This can be understood as a peculiar interpretation of a “site-specific” artwork in motion

It will be scrutinized how (artistic) routes are made visible in the manifestation of art works and its component parts like sketches, posters or photographic documentations. The Argentinian artist Nicolas García Uriburu for example colored the waters of cultural metropolises like Venice, Paris and New York in green. Beside the realization of his impermanent site-specific art works, he documented the ephemeral art actions by taking pictures and drawing maps. With that he inscribed himself distinctively into the map of the international art scene. The Argentinian artist Nicolas García Uriburu for example colored the waters of cultural metropolises like Venice, Paris and New York in green and with that inscribed himself distinctively into the map of the international art scene.

I examine how the art theoretical discourse of *Site Specificity* (Crimp 1986, Melchionne 1997, Coles 2001, Rebentisch 2014, Kwon 1997/2004) can be updated, by taking into account artistic practices of geographical mobility.

- How can site-specific artworks be read analogous to the connotation of the “floating”?
- Do artworks with a mobile-site-specific character have the power to make the static classification of art in terms of nationality obsolete? How is this reflected in art criticism?

- What is the role of the photographic (film) documentation in the process of the canonization of “floating” artworks?

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