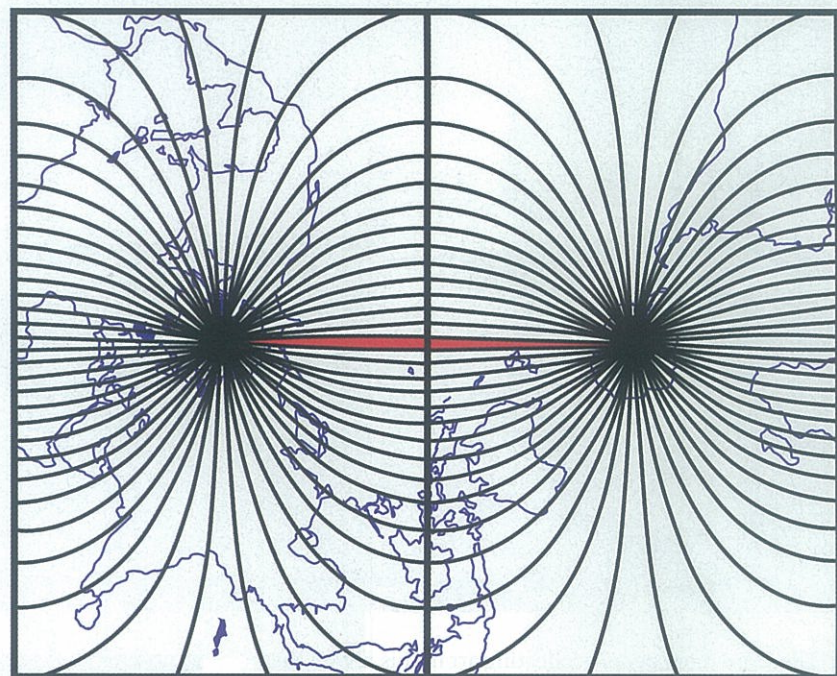






Main picture: Brazilian artist Beatriz Milhazes stands in front of her triptych *Pierrot e Colombina* (2009/2010; \$800,000) at London's Stephen Friedman Gallery, where her work is showing until November 20. Right: Julieta Aranda's *Clear Coordinates for Our Confusion* (2008). Below: Martin Legon's *Los Albinos* (2005).



**Lima, Bogotá, Managua: these are the electric new capitals of the contemporary art world.** Pernilla Holmes reports on the Latin American artists and dealers gaining international clout. Portrait by Jonathan Root.

# *the shock of the nuevo*

**A**long the walls of Manhattan's New Museum are rows of multicoloured ribbons. Each is printed with a wish, ranging from the endearing "I wish I was a little taller" to the disquieting "I wish it was benign". This is the work of Rivane Neuenschwander, one of Brazil's best-known contemporary artists. The idea came from a Catholic church in Salvador, Brazil, where the faithful make a wish while tying a ribbon around their wrist; when the ribbon wears away, legend has it the wish will come true. In Neuenschwander's more secular *I Wish Your Wish* (pictured on final page), however, visitors select wishes left by previous viewers, tying a ribbon around their wrist in exchange for leaving their own on the wall.

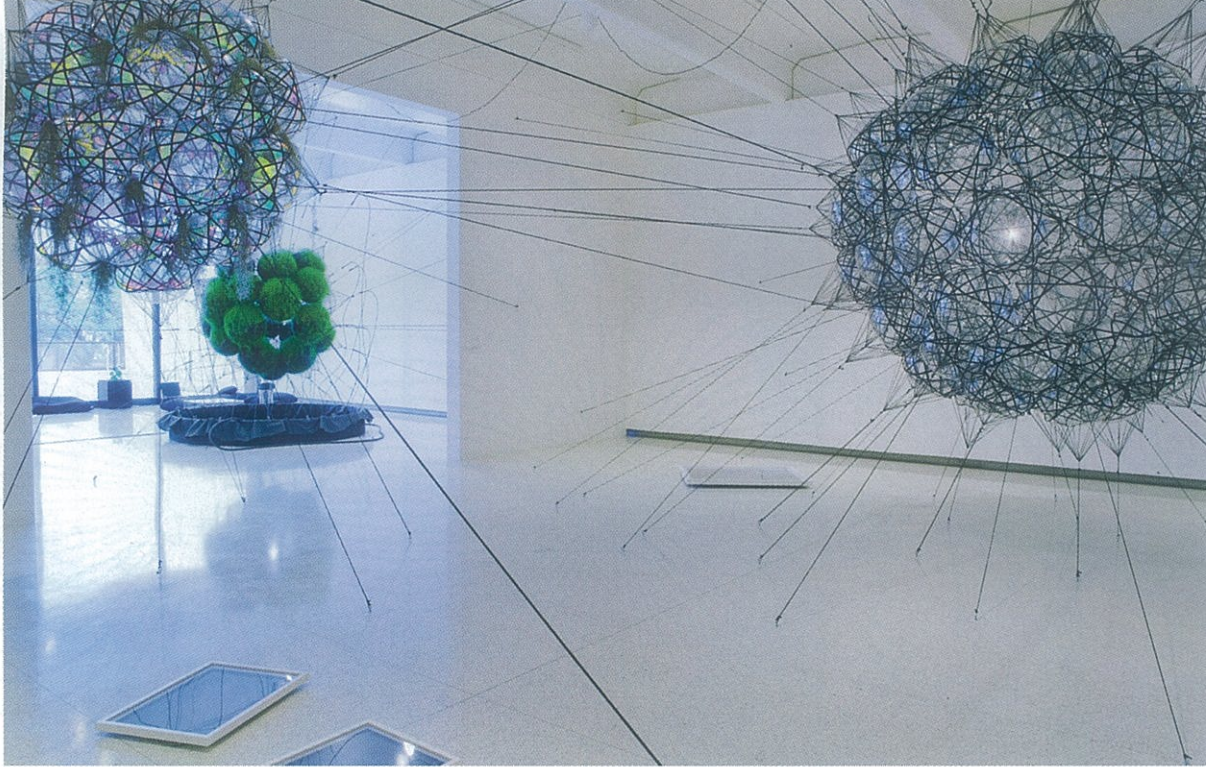
The journey of Neuenschwander's work, from a church in Brazil to a temple of modern-day art in New

York, mirrors the growing prominence of contemporary Latin American art. Stimulated by increased political stability, globalisation and, in many countries, considerable economic growth (the World Bank has forecast that the region's economy will grow by 4.3 per cent this year), local art scenes are thriving.

Mexico City, for example, is home to numerous well-known galleries such as Kurimanzutto, mega-collectors such as juice-tycoon Eugenio López Alonso (whose Jumex Foundation shows international and local contemporary art), and artist-stars such as Gabriel Orozco along with emerging younger talents. São Paulo's art scene has likewise exploded, while collectors in Buenos Aires have founded several important museums.

"Two things are happening," says Marc Spiegler, co-director of Art Basel and Art Basel Miami Beach.





*Edgy movements are forming in less culturally prominent cities such as Bogotá, Managua and, especially, Lima.*

“There are more people collecting art in this region than ever, and more people from outside collecting art from inside the region. Last year we saw an unprecedented number of Latin American collectors come to Art Basel in Miami.” Museums and auction houses are adding to the momentum: MoMA in New York, the Museo Reina Sofia in Madrid and Paris’s Centre Pompidou are all stepping up acquisitions and exhibitions. At Sotheby’s and Christie’s, Latin American artists are increasingly appearing in the high-profile international contemporary art sales. But most importantly, artists from Mexico to Cape Horn are creating a diverse range of strong, internationally resonant work, with edgy new movements forming in less culturally prominent cities such as Bogotá, Managua and, especially, Lima.

“Mexico in the mid-1990s is in some ways comparable to the YBAs in the late 1980s,” says Tanya Barson, curator of international art at Tate Modern, which eight years ago established its own Latin American Acquisitions Committee. Faced with severe cuts to arts funding, the Young British Artists, led by Damien Hirst, were fierce self-promoters. With roughly comparable challenges and chutzpah, Mexican artists such as Gabriel Orozco (an iconic multimedia conceptualist referred to by über-curator Francesco Bonami as “the most important artist of this decade, and probably the next one too”; work pictured far right), Abraham Cruzvillegas (who makes sculptures from found objects) and Minerva Cuevas (known for sociopolitical action works) similarly railroaded curators, collectors and gallerists into noticing their work. “It was a special, creative place in the 1990s,” says Barson. “Many of these artists are now coming into very interesting mid-careers.”

All this sets the stage for a new generation of Mexican artists. Among those garnering attention are Damián Ortega, Carlos Amorales, Pablo Helguera, Julieta Aranda and Adriana Lara, who recently exhibited a piece at New York’s New Museum that consisted of a fresh banana peel installed daily. And last year at the Guggenheim, Aranda (b1975; work pictured on opening pages) showed her installation *Intervals*, an attempt to express how individuals experience time through a combination of radio equipment, gravity-defying sand in an hourglass, a camera obscura and electrocardiogram data.

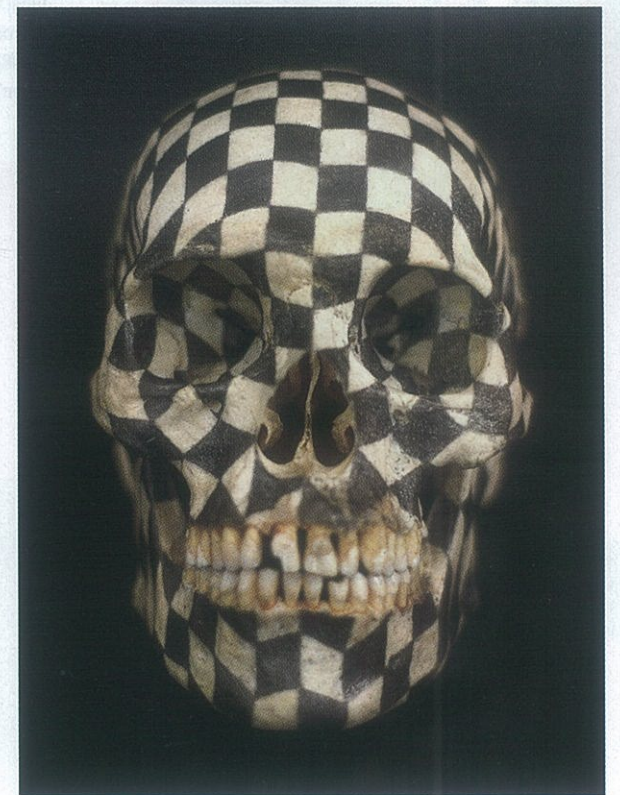
According to experts Pablo León de la Barra, an independent curator, adviser and artist, and Elvis Fuentes, curator of New York’s El Museo del Barrio, similarly artist-driven scenes are making serious headway in Panama, Nicaragua, Guatemala and, especially, Peru, whose capital is the focus of much art-world buzz. Artists in Lima now also have the support of the newly invigorated Museo de Arte de Lima (MALI), which reopened in April. Among the works shown was José Carlos Martinat’s *Vandalizable Moments*, *Abstraction of Power III*. The piece exemplifies an emerging trend that de la Barra describes as “an appropriation of



informal aesthetics”, including street art, street selling and self-construction of housing. Martinat’s models of buildings, all institutions of power in Lima, created a vast white sculpture that the public were invited to spray-paint graffiti over. The political statement is clear, but it also represents a new artistic freedom. “Thirty years ago people lived not only day by day but hour by hour,” says Juan-Carlos Verme, a Lima-based collector, chairman of MALI and a trustee of the American Patrons of Tate. “There were bombs and you had to queue for food. Only now do people have the time and education to make art.”

Recently conflict-torn Bogotá is also home to a growing artistic community. Colombia already has some extremely well-known artists, such as Doris Salcedo (b1958; work pictured overleaf), whose installation *Shibboleth* (1997) in Tate Modern involved creating a large crack in its floor. According to Barson, “Now that Colombia is politically and economically more stable, artistic activity is more prevalent, and we’re seeing a new generation of artists coming through.” Among them is Gabriel Sierra (b1975) who makes works that can, theoretically, be used in daily life. *Hang It All* resembles an Eames-designed rack of hooks that one might hang coats on, were it not being used to impale various fruits. Part of the idea is that, in the absence of any art market in Colombia, actual art objects with no function are impossible to contemplate.

In many countries, government support for the arts is limited, making the impact of a collector’s patronage



all the more strongly felt. In Argentina, for example, collectors such as Juan and Patricia Vergez and Eduardo Costantini have become art-world heavy hitters with their own museums. Costantini’s predominantly Latin American collection spans from modernist art to young contemporary, and he regularly collaborates with major museums in the US and Europe on touring shows hosted at his Museo de Arte Latinoamericano de Buenos Aires. “Finally, we have museums on both sides of the ocean showing major Latin American artists – you just didn’t see this 15 years ago,” he says. His recent acquisitions have included work by Jorge Macchi (b1963), who in 2005 represented Argentina at the Venice Biennale with sound artist Edgardo Rudnitzky. In the Oratorio San Filippo Neri, the artists created a vast trampoline the same shape as the Renaissance fresco on the ceiling above, and set the bouncing on it to specially composed music, revitalising the space with joyous human activity while aping, over and over, the act of ascension.

Juan Vergez (who tips Martin Legon – work pictured on opening page – and Eduardo Basualdo as artists on the up) collects and shows major international artists, and has been key in championing now well-known Argentine artists such as Tomás Saraceno (work pictured top left), a former architect who represented Argentina at the 2009 Venice Biennale and had a UK solo show this summer at the Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art in Gateshead.

Saraceno’s biography is a testament to the various histories of dictatorships and repression that the region has suffered. “I was born in Argentina and after one year, my family was exiled to Italy for 11 years,” he recalls. “We were allowed to return in 1986. It was a shock; I had no idea what Argentina was.” As a result, Saraceno finds caring too much about nationality a bit “silly. I realised I belonged to a greater world than any singular nation and I could identify with the universe overall by looking at shining dots, stars or spiders...”

At Venice he filled the entire Argentine Pavilion with the work *Galaxies Forming Along Filaments*, *Like Droplets Along the Strands of a Spider’s Web*; a vast interpretation of a black widow’s web. He recounts how astrophysicists have used 3-D images of a spider’s web to describe the formation and structure of the

**Clockwise from top: Tomás Saraceno’s *Lighter Than Air* (2009). Gabriel Orozco’s *Black Kites* (1997). José Damasceno’s installation for the 2005 Venice Biennale.**





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Fatima Maleki. Several museums (including Tate and Centre Pompidou) also acquired works from the fair.

Of course, there are countless more artists to discover. Intrepid art lovers could, for example, make their way to the series of biennales that now take place across Central America. Others might do well to find an art adviser. But to Richard Flood, chief curator at the New Museum who curated Rivane Neuenschwander’s show, considering artists by country is not enough. “Of course growing up in Belo Horizonte [Brazil] helped shape who Rivane is, but I have a problem with categorising an artist by nationality. To me it seems more interesting to figure out why she’s different from everyone else rather than the same. That’s what makes an artist special.” ♦

universe, and his studies of webs reinterpret models of interconnected and delicately balanced worlds.

Saraceno also raises an objection to the term “Latin American”, a viewpoint shared by many across the region – perhaps not surprising considering it spans two continents and includes Cuba and the Caribbean. “Each country has a different story,” says Fuentes. “Honduras, for example, is an extremely poor country with a lot of political unrest. People find ways to express themselves, but it’s very different from a country such as Costa Rica, which was never at war and so has a stronger infrastructure.” De la Barra points out that under Hugo Chávez’s present cultural policies, “Venezuela’s art scene has almost disappeared and exists mostly in exile” – though the Faria Fábregas Gallery (in Caracas) showed some beautiful contemporary abstract sculpture from the country at the Art Basel fair in Miami last December.

The region’s largest, most populous country, Brazil, is arguably the centre of Latin American contemporary art. Unlike many of the more tumultuous countries, Brazil has had a relatively continuous art history since the 1920s, even during its period of dictatorship. Jochen Volz, artistic director of Inhotim, the private museum of Bernardo Paz, insists that artists such as Hélio Oiticica and Lygia Clark, and movements such as neo-concretism and kinetic art are experiencing a major re-evaluation. “The canon of art history used to be a cosy one for Europe and America,” says Volz, “but study of these artists has changed everything.”

In more contemporary circles, Brazilian artists such as Rivane Neuenschwander, José Damasceno (b1968; work pictured on previous page), Ernesto Neto (b1964), Beatriz Milhazes (b1960) and Marepe (b1970) are now big names internationally. Damasceno, known for using unorthodox materials such as phone books, blackboard erasers and chess pieces, first garnered international attention in 2005 at the Venice Biennale, with a playful sculpture of what looked like trees but turned out to be products made from them: phone books. Two years later, he was back at Venice representing Brazil. “José has a growing collector base within Brazil as well as internationally,” says his London gallerist Thomas Dane. Prices for his work have risen around 25-30 per cent over the past three years, now ranging from \$12,000 for a smaller work to \$120,000 for a larger installation.

While many areas of the contemporary art market have been volatile recently, the Latin American market has remained relatively stable. According to Sotheby’s expert Carmen Melián, it has been climbing fairly steadily since the mid-1980s. Current stars at auction include the exuberantly colourful Brazilian



abstract painter Milhazes (pictured on opening page). At Sotheby’s New York, her *O Mágico* (2001) sold for \$1.05m in 2008, against an estimate of \$250,000-\$350,000, while in May 2010 the Mexican Orozco’s work achieved a record price of \$506,500 against an estimate of \$300,000-\$400,000 – still by no means outrageous, by art-world standards, for an artist who earlier this year had a major show at MoMA in New York (which will come to Tate Modern in early 2011).

For those hoping to seek out the next Orozco, art fairs such as arteBA in Buenos Aires and SP-arte in São Paulo are, according to art adviser Anna di Stasi, “increasingly regarded as solid platforms for emerging talent”. Abroad, PINTA, a Latin American art fair that began in New York four years ago, expanded this year to London. “It beat all our expectations,” says director Alejandro Zaia. “We started in New York just when the economy went sour, but it did well then, and has been getting larger and stronger each year.” Among a glittery 2,000-strong crowd at the opening of the fair in London were high-profile collectors such as Tiqui Atencio, Catherine Petitgas and Eskander and

**Top: Brazilian artist Nivane Neuenschwander’s *I Wish Your Wish* (2003). Above: *Untitled* (2007) by Doris Salcedo, the Colombian artist famous for the crack in the floor at Tate Modern.**

#### THE LATIN SCHOOL

**GALLERIES:** Alison Jacques Gallery, 16-18 Berners St, London W1 (020-7631 4720; [www.alisonjacquesgallery.com](http://www.alisonjacquesgallery.com)); for Lygia Clark. **Anton Kern Gallery**, 532 West 20th St, New York 10011 (+1212-367 9663; [www.antonkerngallery.com](http://www.antonkerngallery.com)); for Marepe. **Faria Fábregas Gallery**, Calle Choroní, Caracas, Venezuela (+58212-993 0536; [www.faria-fabregas.com](http://www.faria-fabregas.com)). **Galeria Casas Riegner**, Calle 70A, Bogotá, Colombia (+571-249 9194; [www.casasriegner.com](http://www.casasriegner.com)); for Gabriel Sierra. **Galeria Enrique Guerrero**, Horacio 1549 Polanco, 11540 Mexico (+5255-5280 2941; [www.galeriaenriqueguerrero.com](http://www.galeriaenriqueguerrero.com)); for Pablo Helguera. **Galerie Lelong**, 528 West 26th St, New York 10001 (+1212-315 0470; [www.galerielelong.com](http://www.galerielelong.com)); for Eduardo Basualdo, Hélio Oiticica. **Galeria Leme**, Rua Agostino Cantu 88, São Paulo (+5511-3814 8184; [www.galerialeme.com](http://www.galerialeme.com)); for José Carlos Martinat. **Galerie Michael Janssen**, Rudi Dutschke Strasse 26, D-10969 Berlin (+4930-259 27250; [www.galeriemichaeljanssen.de](http://www.galeriemichaeljanssen.de)); for Julieta Aranda. **House of Gaga**, Durango 204, Col Roma, 06700 Mexico City (+5255-25 1435; [www.houseofgaga.com](http://www.houseofgaga.com)); for Adriana Lara. **James Cohan Gallery**, 533 West 26th St, New York (+1212-714 9600; [www.jamescohan.com](http://www.jamescohan.com)); for Beatriz Milhazes. **Kurimanzutto**, Rafael Rebollar 94, Col San Miguel Chapultepec, 11850 Mexico City (+5255-5256 2408; [www.kurimanzutto.com](http://www.kurimanzutto.com)); for Gabriel Orozco, Damian Ortega, Minerva Cuevas, Abraham Cruzvillegas. **Ruth Benzacar Galeria de Arte**, Florida 1000, Buenos Aires (+5411-4313 8480; [www.ruthbenzacar.com](http://www.ruthbenzacar.com)); for

Eduardo Basualdo, Jorge Macchi. **Stephen Friedman Gallery**, 25-28 Old Burlington St, London W1 (020-7494 1434; [www.stephenfriedman.com](http://www.stephenfriedman.com)); for Rivane Neuenschwander and Beatriz Milhazes. **Tanya Bonakdar Gallery**, 521 West 21st St, New York 10011 (+1212-414 4144; [www.tanyabonakdargallery.com](http://www.tanyabonakdargallery.com)); for Ernesto Neto, Tomas Saraceno. **Thomas Dane Gallery**, 11 Duke St, London SW1 (020-7925 2505; [www.thomasdane.com](http://www.thomasdane.com)); for Abraham Cruzvillegas and José Damasceno. **White Cube**, 25-26 Mason’s Yard, London SW1 (020-7930 5373; [www.whitecube.com](http://www.whitecube.com)); for Damien Ortega and Doris Salcedo. **Yvon Lambert Gallery**, 550 West 21st St, New York 10011 (+1212-242 3611; [www.yvon-lambert.com](http://www.yvon-lambert.com)); for Carlos Amorales. **MUSEUMS:** **El Museo del Barrio**, New York ([www.elmuseo.org](http://www.elmuseo.org)). **Inhotim**, Brazil ([www.inhotim.org.br](http://www.inhotim.org.br)). **Jumex Foundation**, Mexico ([www.jumex.com](http://www.jumex.com)). **Museo de Arte Latinoamericano de Buenos Aires**, [www.malab.org.ar](http://www.malab.org.ar). **Museo de Arte de Lima**, [www.museoarte.perucultural.org.pe](http://www.museoarte.perucultural.org.pe). **Sotheby’s**, New York (+1212-606 7000; [www.sothebys.com](http://www.sothebys.com)). **Tate Modern**, [www.tate.org](http://www.tate.org); Gabriel Orozco, Jan 19–April 11 2011. **FAIRS:** **ArteBA**, [www.arteba.org](http://www.arteba.org); Buenos Aires, May 19–23 2011. **Pinta**, [www.pintaart.com](http://www.pintaart.com); New York, Nov 11–14 2010, London, June 5–8 2011. **SP-arte**, [www.sp-arte.com](http://www.sp-arte.com); São Paulo 12–15 May 2011. **ADVISERS/CURATORS:** **Anna di Stasi**, +1917-225 9034; [www.bauerdistasi.com/www.pinacotecanyc.com](http://www.bauerdistasi.com/www.pinacotecanyc.com). **Pablo León de la Barra**, [centrefortheaestheticrevolution.blogspot.com](http://centrefortheaestheticrevolution.blogspot.com).

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