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Art Collectors in Network and Identity Narratives: Contributions to a Cartography of the Genre of Types and Costumes in South America

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Abstract

One of the best-known visual manifestations of nineteenth-century Latin America is *costumbrismo*, a genre that describes social types and popular subjects. Scholarship has usually understood this genre as an *illustration* of early Republican times produced by the gaze of European artists, proposing a hierarchical structure in relation to the production and consumption patterns of these images. Following the path opened in the last decade by new studies, this paper contributes to the ongoing debates on *costumbrismo*, by examining the role played by a South American network of historians and collectors modeling identity narratives throughout the twentieth-century.

Résumé

Le *costumbrismo* (ou peinture de mœurs) est l'une des manifestations les plus connues de l'art latino-américain du XIX^{ème} siècle. Ce genre, qui décrit des types sociaux et des sujets populaires, a longtemps été interprété comme une illustration des premiers régimes républicains d'Amérique latine, et comme le produit du regard d'artistes européens, donc comme la manifestation des dynamiques de hiérarchie culturelle entre la production et la consommation de ces images. Dans ce qui suit, nous reprenons le chemin interprétatif ouvert ces dernières années par une nouvelle ligne de recherche sur la question du *costumbrismo*. Nous contribuons à ce débat en analysant le rôle d'un réseau sud-américain d'historiens et de collectionneurs, dans la construction des récits identitaires latino-américains dans la deuxième moitié du XX^{ème} siècle.

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One of the most unmistakable visual manifestations of nineteenth-century Latin America is *costumbrismo*. This genre describes social *types* and *popular subjects* through the representation of costumes, habits, trades, and environment. *Gauchos*, *arrieros*, *caipiras*, *huasos*, *bogas*, *cargueros*, cowboys, and peasants of different regions populated illustrated albums, atlases, and magazines along with mestizos and mulattos of all kinds, indigenous peoples from different cultures and regions, and Africans from multiple origins.¹ *Costumbrista* images inhabit the fragile world of paper, in-between drawing, watercolor, engraving, and photography, usually moving from hand-made images to different systems of mechanical reproduction—ensuring, thus, the widespread of its iconography. Twentieth-century *costumbrista* scholarship primarily focused, until recently, on two research areas: the iconographical identification of different *corpus* of images produced during the early republican period throughout the Americas, and the analysis of the *European gaze* that created those images.² The objectivity effect of these lines of work and their hegemonic presence in academia obscured the exploration of other research areas. In the past decade, however, two different fields of study have successfully been opened: the development of methodological and historiographical tools to study print culture and the recovery of local *costumbrista* artists.³ These two areas have unsettled the binary hypothesis that proposed these images as the reflection of the Western's gaze in relation to *peripheral* societies.

¹ *Gauchos* and *arrieros*, *caipiras* and *huasos* refer to the cowboy and peasant national types of Argentina/Uruguay, Brazil, and Chile, respectively. The most characteristic Colombian types are the *bogas*, or sailors of the Magdalena River, and the *cargueros*, men that usually carried passengers in their backs across the cordillera.

² See, Mary Louise Pratt, *Ojos imperiales. Literatura de viajes y transculturación* (México: FCE, (1992) 2010); Patricia Londoño Vega, *América exótica: panorámicas, tipos y costumbres del siglo XIX. Obras sobre papel: colecciones de la Banca Central, Colombia, Ecuador, México, Perú y Venezuela* (Bogotá: Biblioteca Luis-Ángel Arango, Banco de la República, 2004); Ana Pessoa, Julio Bandeira, and Pedro Corrêa do Lago, *Pallière e o Brasil* (Rio de Janeiro: Capivara, 2011); Pablo Diener and María Fatima Costa, *Rugendas e o Brasil* (Rio de Janeiro: Capivara, 2012); Julio Bandeira y Pedro Corrêa do Lago, *Debret e o Brasil* (Rio de Janeiro: Capivara, 2013); Roberto Amigo, *Un viajero virreinal. Acuarelas inéditas de la sociedad rioplatense* (Buenos Aires: Roberto Raúl Vega, 2015), among others.

³ Majluf, Natalia. "Pattern-book of Nations: Images of Types as Costumes in Asia and Latin America, 1800-1860." AA.VV. *Reproducing Nations: Types and Costumes in Asia and Latin America, ca. 1800-1860* (Nueva York: Americas Society, 2006); Marcos B. Burke and Natalia Majluf. *Tipos del Perú. La Lima criolla de Pancho Fierro* (Madrid: Ediciones El Viso, 2008); Juan Ricardo Rey and Carolina Vanegas C. *Noticias iluminadas: arte e identidad en el siglo XIX* (Bogotá: Alcaldía Mayor de Bogotá, 2011).

In sum, iconography and the study of the production context of these images have contributed to charge them in ideological terms. In *costumbrista* images, what is at stake is the conformation of visual identities articulated around the figure of the "popular subject." This understanding of *costumbrismo* usually entails the idea of a conservative, ahistorical, and homogeneous nation.

This paper will propose a new area of work through the revision of a specific case study that we think will enrich the ongoing debates on *costumbrismo*. We will pay close attention to the articulation of identity narratives throughout the first half of the twentieth-century by a South American network of historians and collectors that revolved around an art dealer based in Europe and specialized in *costumbrista* images. Our case study follows the lead of a previous work on the watercolor series' *De Santiago a Mendoza*.⁴ This series was attributed to what appears to be the non-existent figure of French artist Alphonse Giast (a painter that according to the "national narratives" of several countries was presumably active in the Southern Cone between the 1820s and 1840s). The so-called Giast's series characterized popular culture of different geopolitical contexts such as Argentina, Chile, and Colombia. However, the study of these *costumbrista* images led us to identify peculiar iconographical similarities with the work of other artists active in different geographical areas within the Americas in the same period, obscuring the "originality" and "testimonial value" of the series. Beyond the real existence of the artist or the authenticity of the plates, what called our attention was the nationalist, even, essentialist use given to these same watercolors in very different places (Fig. 1).

⁴ Josefina de la Maza, Juan Ricardo Rey, Catalina Valdés, and Carolina Vanegas C. "El enigmático caso Giast: Transitividad, reflexividad e identidades múltiples en la producción y circulación de acuarelas de viajeros decimonónicos en Sudamérica," *VII Congreso Internacional de Teoría e Historia de las Artes, XV Jornadas CAIA, Las redes del arte: intercambios, procesos y trayectos en la circulación de las imágenes* (Buenos Aires: CAIA, 2013).



Figure 1: Alphonse Giast (signed) *Jinete*, ca. 1831. From the series *De Santiago à Mendoza*, no. 16. ©Archivo Central Andrés Bello, Universidad de Chile.

The “Giast case” is related, from our point of view, with what scholars such as Flora Capistrano-Baker and Natalia Majluf—for the Philippine and Peruvian context, respectively—have coined as “multiple originals.”⁵ In other words, replicas of drawings and watercolors that circulated as “originals” and were produced by the same artists (or their assistants) that originally produced them. According to Majluf, the relationship of these replicas with the ideas of nationalism “tend to overshadow its reliance on a system that in turn impose on them a certain level of uniformity.”⁶ In this paper, therefore, we will approach and understand this system by analyzing the scope and

national agendas of a particular network of historians, bibliophiles, and antiquarians. Active between the 1940s and 1970s, this group of intellectuals from Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and Colombia were connected by the same art dealer in Europe—Roberto Heymann, a Brazilian based in Paris—and through correspondence and the exchange of art works. This group also had a common purpose: to build a coherent corpus of images for the distinctive national histories of every nation. In what follows, we will explore the ways in which *costumbrista* images that used to be taken as an evidence of the European foreigner gaze over an alleged collective South American identity, became a distinctive source of national memory while we will interrogate the personal

⁵ Flora H. Capistrano-Baker, *Multiple Originals, Original Multiples: 19th-century Images of Philippine Costumes* (Makati City: Ayala Foundation, 2004), 9.

⁶ Natalia Majluf, “Pattern-book of Nations: Images of Types as Costumes in Asia and Latin America, 1800-1860,” 28.

and shared motivations of these collectors to assemble such groups of images.

Collecting Nations

The collectors of *costumbrista* images we study have a direct relationship with the visual articulation of a historical discourse. Most of the images collected during the late nineteenth and early twentieth-century were originally produced as part of the successful genre of travel literature (a genre that was particularly fruitful throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth-centuries). The corpus of collected images and stories were, according to different sources, the result of a “foreign gaze” –that of European travelers (most of them British and French) that toured the continent with different political, scientific, and artistic agendas. Paradoxically, later on these images were systematically detached from their original contexts and were selected and regrouped as “national collections,” constituting different national stories that are still present today in editorial, didactic, and museum based contexts.⁷ (Fig. 2)

This phenomenon, that we have called “nationalist collecting,” recovers national identity debates developed around a series of historical events that highlight this patriotic/foundational context: the commemorations of the IV centenary of the “discovery of America” in 1892, the Cuban independence war (the last Spanish colonial stronghold in America), and the national celebrations of the centennial of independence from Spain in the first decades of the twentieth-century. The nationalist aesthetic discourses of that time oscillated between two traditions, *indigenismo* and *mestizaje* –and their diverse and multiple understandings–, that aimed to create a

cultural image of the nation’s past and its inhabitants. This concern was not exclusive of Latin American intellectuals. For example, the Spanish philosopher Miguel de Unamuno (1864-1936) proposed a set of notions to think the problem of *mestizaje* and the “purity” of nations. In his essay, *En torno al casticismo* (1895), Unamuno distinguished between *Historia*, as the major political changes narrated in the written press, and *Intra-historia*, defined as the tradition emerged from the sedimentation of centuries, whose legacy survived by the *hombres sin historia* or “men without history,” those who give continuity to their culture by the ways of popular and oral traditions.⁸



Figure 2: Alphonse Giast (signed), “Campesino,” 1831. From the series *De Santiago à Mendoza*, no. 26. ©Archivo Central Andrés Bello, Universidad de Chile. This image was used in the museographical display of Chile’s Museo Histórico Nacional to illustrate eighteenth century Chilean peasants.

⁷ See, for example, the books of José León Pagano, *El arte de los argentinos* (Buenos Aires, Ed. Del autor, 1937), *Historia del arte argentino desde los aborígenes hasta el momento actual* (Buenos Aires: L’Amateur, 1944); Eugenio Pereira Salas, *Estudios sobre la historia del arte en Chile republicano* (Santiago: Universitaria, 1992); Antonio Romera, *Asedio a la pintura chilena* (Santiago: Ed. Nacimiento, 1969); and *Enciclopedia Salvat de arte colombiano* (Barcelona, Salvat, 1975). These books were written with a foundational and canonizing aim. In these works, art production is included as part of the nation’s official story, according to the principles of a nationalistic positivism that proposed a continuity between society, territory, history, and culture.

⁸ Miguel de Unamuno, “En torno al casticismo,” *Ensayos*. T. I (Madrid: Publicaciones de la residencia de estudiantes, [1895] 1916), 38-40. In Unamuno’s thought, positivist notions such as race and nation are comprehended from a cultural viewpoint. His position precedes the work of German Oswald Spengler (1880-1936) and Spanish José Ortega y Gasset (1883-1955) on philosophy of history. These two philosophers developed their critical thought on the West while writing between the first and second World Wars.

In America, the debates revolving around *indigenismo* and *mestizaje* have a long history rooted in the Enlightenment and the Independence Wars. These debates originated as a reaction to the rigid social and racial structure imposed by the Spanish in America, the caste system, and the ideology of “pure blood.”⁹ In general terms, *indigenismo* proposed to reclaim the lost place of the “original inhabitants” of America, along with their thought and cultural traditions. *Indigenismo* also implied a continuous negotiation between the idea of an indigenous past (a past of heroic figures and great civilizations) and the diminished political, social, and cultural present of different indigenous groups throughout the Americas. *Criollismo*, on the other hand, defended the rights of the descendants of Europeans born in America and, at the same time, the different miscegenation processes with African and indigenous populations. For example, different symbols that recognized past indigenous nobility emerged, particularly during the 18th century. These symbols, such as portrait galleries, introduced *mestizos*—not the indigenous population—as the rightful heirs that were supposed to continue the tradition of a “noble past.” The creation of a *criollo* culture was the result, not without conflict, of three centuries of miscegenation. *Indigenismo* and *criollismo*, grossly summarized here, gained new significance during the celebrations of the centennial of independence from Spanish rule, as part of the theoretical and historical framework to think and debate the origin of national culture.

It is within this framework that *costumbrismo* acquired a new role in the context of what we have called “national collecting.” Argentinean Bonifacio del Carril (1911-1994), Chilean Armando Braun Menéndez (1898-1986), and Colombians Carlos Botero Mejía (1906-1962) and Braulio Henao Mejía (1898-1959) were a network of collectors active in the 1940s in relation to a common objective: create national iconographies based on popular subjects. For them, these popular subjects

were totally strange to the telluric transcendentalism proposed by the “indigenist modernism” and equally distant from the political claim promoted by the avant-garde Americanism (represented, for example, by Mexican mural painting). Instead of political contingency, this group of scholars and dilettantes chose to collect images that allowed them to historicize popular subjects—a historicity that it is based, as one can easily observe, in the testimonial vision of European travelers. Their collections shared one feature: the inclusion of images that until today are considered as “illustrations” of the identities of their respective countries. With respect to this shared feature, it is worthwhile mentioning Del Carril’s understanding of the differences between “art” and “iconography,” to grasp the ideological and intellectual approach of these collectors to *costumbrista* images. According to Del Carril, iconography, unlike art, reveals characteristics of national identity. At the same time, however, is a “minor” artistic manifestation, because its main focus is to document. This paradox leads us to Unamuno’s thought and his concept of *Intra-historia*. According to the Spanish philosopher, what is *puro*, or in other words, *castizo*, it is not what it is “original” of a nation. On the contrary, what is *puro* is equivalent to *originario*, something that is common to all human experience. This is why—following Unamuno—it is more important the representation of daily life rather than the grandiloquence of artistic representation: “we prefer art than life, although the most obscure and humble life is worth infinitely more than the greatest work of art.”¹⁰ When comparing this idea with Del Carril’s viewpoint, it is possible to understand that the importance of iconography is comparable to that of *Intra-historia*.¹¹

The Argentinian historian—one of the nodes of this network—dedicated part of his life to research and collect the iconography of his country. His best-known publication was the

⁹ Ilona Katzew (ed.), *Contested Visions in the Spanish Colonial World* (Los Angeles: LACMA, 2012), 39-109.

¹⁰ See Natalia Majluf, “De la rebelión al museo: Genealogías y retratos de los incas, 1781-1900,” AA. VV. *Los incas reyes del Perú* (Lima: Banco de Crédito, 2005), 277. Ilona Katzew (ed.), *Contested Visions*, 63-109.

¹¹ “...preferimos el arte a la vida, cuando la vida más oscura y humilde vale infinitamente más que la más grande obra de arte”, Miguel de Unamuno, “En torno al casticismo,” 40.

Monumenta iconográfica (1964). For Del Carril, the images grouped in this volume were not works of art but “facts or events of life, cityscapes and landscapes, human types, and customs.”¹² According to Del Carril, *costumbrista* iconography would be a genre oriented to identify the national, where artists “did not produce pure art works, but works of documentation; they painted what they saw and how they saw it.”¹³ The collector considered drawing as a reliable testimony of the past. The “truth value” of the pieces included by Del Carril in his *Monumenta iconográfica* responded to the gaze of the artists—British, French, and Prussian travelers. Del Carril considered this gaze as a warranty to articulate the visual and national identity of Argentina.¹⁴

The understanding of *costumbrismo* as national iconography is closely related to the case study we have been researching: the series of watercolors, *De Santiago a Mendoza*, attributed to Alphonse Giast. Bonifacio del Carril bought this series in 1940 to Brazilian Roberto Heymann, the owner of the Parisian antique shop “Casa Brasileira.” Del Carril kept for himself four of them, those that resembled “Argentina,”¹⁵ and gave away the images that looked like “Chile” to Chilean historian and collector Armando Braun Menéndez.¹⁶ Neither Del Carril nor Braun Menéndez thought or knew that most of these watercolors had evident iconographical similarities with images that referred to Colombia. These coincidences—related to repetitions of characters, scenes, and backgrounds, with minimal variations of color or composition—were not evident until later, when the collections started circulating across the Americas. While the Argentinean and Chilean collections started circulating in the 1960s, the Colombian images were known much later, in the

1990s.¹⁷ The different character of the Colombian collection has to do with the slightly different nature of the collectors. Unlike Braun-Menéndez and Del Carril, who were historians and kept a public cultural activity and were concerned with the open circulation of their collected images, the Colombian collectors, Carlos Botero Mejía and Braulio Henao Mejía, were part of an economic, political, and cultural elite that conceived their collections as private assets and elements of social distinction. This stance allows us to understand why the “Colombian” watercolors remained unknown until the death of both collectors, when the images started acquiring a national value.

Three collections, one antiquarian

Roberto Heymann has an uneven recognition. Although he is a key figure in our puzzle, Heymann’s biography is somewhat diffuse and not much information about his life and work is known. The earliest piece of information we have regarding the art dealer is from the 1930s in the Brazilian press, where he was mentioned as an expert on the Americas’ iconography.¹⁸ It seems that Heymann’s *Casa Brasileira* was the headquarters for Latin American collectors looking to organize and complete national iconographies. It is probable that Heymann gained relevance as a Latin Americanist art dealer in a context where the art market was being redefined after the devastating effects of World War I and II. In one hand, many European private collections

¹² This concept was used by Spanish historians Fernando Chueca Goitia (1911-2004) and his disciple Santiago Sebastián López (1931-1995). Both studied Spanish American art and were in contact with Del Carril in publications such as *Anales del Instituto de Arte Americano* and *Investigaciones Estéticas Mario Buschiazco* of the Universidad de Buenos Aires—this academic association makes visible at least one of the different ways in which Unamuno’s thought reverberated in the Americas.

¹³ Bonifacio Del Carril, *Monumenta iconográfica: paisajes, ciudades, tipos, usos y costumbres de la Argentina: 1536-1860* (Buenos Aires: Emecé, 1964), 14.

¹⁴ Bonifacio Del Carril, *Monumenta iconográfica*, 7.

¹⁵ These watercolors remain in the collection of Del Carril’s heirs.

¹⁶ These pictures are kept at Universidad de Chile’s Andrés Bello Archive.

¹⁷ Bonifacio Del Carril, *Monumenta iconográfica: paisajes, ciudades, tipos, usos y costumbres de la Argentina: 1536-1860* (Buenos Aires: Emecé, 1964); Eugenio Pereira Salas, *El rostro romántico de Chile: Colección Armando Braun Menéndez: dibujos y acuarelas originales sobre Chile de los pintores de la expedición de Malaspina, Pozo, Brambila y Ravenet y de Alphonse Giast, Juan Mauricio Rugendas, Andre-Auguste Borget y Benoit-Henry Darondeau* (Santiago: Sociedad de Bibliófilos Chilenos, 1962); Malcom Deas, Efraín Sánchez, and Aída Martínez, *Tipos y costumbres de la Nueva Granada. Colección de Pinturas y Diario de Joseph Brown* (Bogotá: Fondo Cultural Cafetero, 1989); Beatriz González, “Augusto Le Moyne y el tráfico de imágenes,” *Donación Carlos Botero-Nora Restrepo: Augusto Le Moyne en Colombia 1828-1841* (Bogotá: Museo Nacional de Colombia, 2004).

¹⁸ In 1938, Heymann is mentioned in the Brazilian press as the individual who recuperated and sold the model of Louis Rochet’s Allegory of Don Pedro I; see: “Rodin e a estatua de D. Pedro I”, *Ilustração Brasileira*, n. 41, XVI, September, 1938. In 1941, President of Brazil, Getúlio Vargas, bought more than 500 pieces to the Petropolis’ museum. The above-mentioned models were among the works acquired by Vargas. One could infer that Heymann mediated the transaction; see, “Quadros e objetos históricos para os museus brasileiros” *Jornal do Brasil*, August 27 1941, 13. On the other hand, in the reviews of Braun Menéndez’ collection, Heymann is identified as a “renowned connoisseur of South American iconography.” See, Eugenio Pereira Salas, *El rostro romántico de Chile*, 25; Bonifacio Del Carril, *Monumenta iconográfica*, 52-53, and José Zapiola, *Recuerdos de treinta años (1810-1840)* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Francisco de Aguirre, 1974), IX.

were put up for sale; on the other, art dealers had to innovate and redefine the profile of their potential clients, offering, in this case, pieces for non-European buyers.¹⁹ Heymann's prestige was obscured, however, in 1947 when he recognized that he had sold fake watercolors of Jean Baptiste Debret (1768-1848), a French artist active in Brazil in the first half of the nineteenth-century, to Raymundo Ottoni de Castro Maya (1894-1968), an important Brazilian collector.²⁰ The origin of the pieces he was dealing with was uncertain—especially when it was not possible to document the background of single sheets or small series of drawings and watercolors.

Casa Brasileira is the starting point of the so-called Giast series of watercolors. Indeed, the “Giast case” is exceptional because nothing was known about the artist until the watercolors were attributed to him in 1940. The inexistence of historical data about Giast's figure contrasts with the interest he triggered among specialists. His biography was organized in relation to the series of watercolors: his itinerary begun, supposedly, in Chile in 1825; he would have traveled to Chile and Argentina around 1831, and later on he would have explored Uruguay and Peru, concluding his South American tour in Brazil in 1847.²¹ Probably with the intention of add complexity to Giast's historical figure and link him to a well-documented nineteenth-century character, Heymann proposed that Giast teamed up with diplomat and artist Auguste Le Moyne (1800-1880) to produce a

repertoire of images from New Granada somewhere around 1845.²²

It is important to mention that Giast only “signed” a part of the series—the images that allegedly represent Chile and Argentina. This group has, indeed, a peculiar format and style that distinguishes them from the rest. It is possible to consider that the dealer, and later on the collectors, manipulated these watercolors, in order to subtly change the evidence that different “hands” might have produced these images, with the intention of attributing the whole group of watercolors to a single figure—Giast. We might be facing the “invention” of an artist, issue that problematizes topics such as circulation, falsification, attribution, and, of course, collecting. As previously noted, it is not our intention to close the topic on Giast's authenticity. On the contrary, our objective in this paper is to reveal the functions performed by this “artist” within the historical-visual stories of each of the already mentioned countries.

The material and historiographical operations associated to the so-called Giast series, reinforces the existence of a network of Latin American collectors and, most of all, the significance of a dealer that fully understood the agendas of his clients. Moreover, Heymann comprehended the complex relationship that the collector establishes with the object of desire: in this case, the search for a desired projection of a national identity that it is projected no matter what into the image. This is how a series of images probably produced—at least some of them—in a Colombian context, according to Beatriz González' and our research, ended up illustrating customs of Chile and Argentina.²³ Also, this is how the flowing condition

¹⁹ According to researcher Vera Beatriz Siqueira, Heymann had to leave the French capital in 1942 in order to preserve his stock of artworks, finding refuge in Beausoleil, a small city near Monaco. Vera Beatriz Siqueira, “A alegria dos amantes: Jean-Baptiste Debret na coleção Castro Maya,” AA. VV. *Castro Maya Colecionador de Debret* (Rio de Janeiro: Capivara, 2003), 55.

²⁰ After acquiring works by Debret in 1939, Castro Maya asked Heymann and Debret's heir to sign a statement ensuring that none of them had more original works by the French artist. Ten years later, however, Castro Maya found out that Heymann sold three Debret watercolors to another collector. Confronted by Castro Maya, Heymann recognized the falsity of the pieces, breaking them down. See, Vera Beatriz Siqueira, “A alegria dos amantes”, 61. In the last decade, Capivara has published three books where almost sixty falsified pieces by Heymann have been inventoried: Ana Pessoa, Julio Bandeira y Pedro Corrêa Do Lago, *Pallière e o Brasil*, (2011); Pablo Diener and María Fatima Costa, *Rugendas e o Brasil*, (2012); Julio Bandeira y Pedro Corrêa do Lago, *Debret e o Brasil*, (2013). Commerce of fakes has not been deeply studied in the Latino American context. Attention to this topic would probably reveal other networks.

²¹ This itinerary corresponded to the group of images allegedly signed and dated by Giast. There is no news about these images; this itinerary is repeated without variations in Eugenio Pereira Salas, *El rostro romántico de Chile*; Bonifacio Del Carril, *Monumenta iconográfica*, and José Zapiola, *Recuerdos de treinta años (1810-1840)*.

²² Heymann attributes to Giast a tableau (nowadays in Colombia's Banco de la República's collection, regs. AP4926-36) which was produced, according to the art dealer, to illustrate the second edition of Le Moyne's memoirs (edition that remains unpublished). It is important to mention that Heymann's statement has not documental support. Between 1840 and 1849 Le Moyne was part of a diplomatic mission in Peru—his presence in Nueva Granada is documented between 1828 and 1839.

²³ Beatriz González suggested that even the word “Giast” was originated after a confusion with the last name of the Colombian artist and historian José Manuel Groot (1800-1878), who also painted *costumbrista* images. She affirmed, thus, that the whole series belonged to the current Colombian territory. We differ from her opinion, however. Our iconographical research allowed us to identify the representation of the drinking of *mate*, widely consumed in the Río de la Plata region. See Josefina De la Maza et. al. “El enigmático caso Giast...”

of the images produced within the context of local and traveler European artists in the first half of the nineteenth-century became fixated in national structures (with clear ideological agendas) losing, in part, their transnational condition (Figs. 3 and 4).



Figure 3: Alphonse Giast (signed), *De compras en una tienda*, ca. 1831. From the series *De Santiago à Mendoza*, no. 35. ©Archivo Central Andrés Bello, Universidad de Chile.

Considering the circulation of copies, replicas, and “multiple originals,” one of the main challenges of this group of collectors was the acquisition of unique and original pieces. The collection of *costumbrista* images did not exclusively consist in putting together “illustrations.” The practice of collecting was motivated by the testimonial function of the image; in this case, the materiality (paper), technique (drawing and watercolor), and authorship (European traveler artists) of the pieces, proved, according to this network, their historicity.

Besides considering the image as a testimony of the past, the common historiographical operation of this network of collectors and historians was to implicitly respond to a peculiar hierarchy of the fine arts. In the first place, European artists would produce the most important works of art; second, there were the works produced by Europeans in America. In a third category would be those artists from the Americas painting “like Europeans.”²⁴ Although this hierarchy has contradictions and exceptions, it is useful to understand the “invention of a French artist,” Alphonse Giast, in order to give more relevance to the series of watercolors. It is also important to consider that the attribution responds to the series’ belonging to a genre that implies an external observer that describes an “other.” For twentieth century historians and collectors, there was no possibility to consider the participation of a “local artist.” At the same time, for them it was impossible to think that the European “maker” of the series was not an artist. For example, Del Carril affirmed about these images: “the beauty and interest of these three pieces exempt them from any commentary and are sufficient proof of the interest emanating from this little known artist.”²⁵ Another significant example is González’ opinion on Joseph Brown: “His reason to be in Colombia was mining, but as any English he was aquarellist.”²⁶

Costumbrista images gained, during the first half of the twentieth-century, new status. This status ranged from the symbolic value acquired due to the interest of collectors and amateurs to the economic value obtained thanks to the circulation of drawings and prints in the open market. *Costumbrista* images are at the crossroads of several issues. As presented in this paper, these groups of images move along high and low culture and in-between genres, because of their malleability in terms of their materiality, reproducibility, and, of course, their

²⁴ To reinforce this idea, see Roberto Amigo’s “El gran debate: Los funerales de Atahualpa en el Río de la Plata,” in Majluf, Natalia (ed). *Luis Montero. Los funerales de Atahualpa* (Lima: MALI, 2011), 146.

²⁵ Bonifacio Del Carril, *Monumenta iconográfica*, 14.

²⁶ “Su destino en Colombia era la explotación de la minería, pero como buen inglés era acuarelista.” González, Beatriz. *Manual de arte del siglo XIX en Colombia* (Bogotá, Universidad de Los Andes, 2013), 149.

iconographical nature. *Costumbrismo* is a flexible genre that moves in-between the fine arts hierarchy and the uses (and misuses) given to the enormous variety of pictures considered under the genre. The malleability of *costumbrismo*—one of its most relevant features—and its critical fortune were, as we have presented here, reactivated in post war Paris. Indeed, the city was the center of a network that put together different Latin American researchers that were looking for a “real” and “vivid” image of the Americas.

The axis Europe-America was reactivated, then, from a scholarly context. The network we have been studying was articulated at the time of the contact between Heymann and the collectors, but it has also acquired new meanings in relation to the study of the national connotations given to these images in diverse national contexts. This new line of work allows reinforcing the thinking of South-South research strategies, as well as going in and out of national and transnational academic and research agendas.



Figure 4: Joseph Brown (signed) based on a drawing of José Manuel Groot. *The interior of a store in the principal street of Bogota with mule drivers purchasing*, c. 1830. Watercolor. Royal Geographical Society of London (X842/40)

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