



The Counter-Public Sphere in the Condor Years

October 15, 2020–January 15, 2021

Exhibition organized by the Institute for Studies on Latin American Art (ISLAA)

Curated by Nicolás Guagnini

50 East 78th Street
New York, NY 10075

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The Institute for Studies on Latin American Art ([ISLAA](#)) is delighted to announce the exhibition *The Counter-Public Sphere in the Condor Years*, curated by Nicolás Guagnini, in its New York City space. This event marks the second installment of ISLAA's new on-site exhibitions program, whose inaugural series features guest curators and focuses on conceptual art movements across Latin America.

The Counter-Public Sphere in the Condor Years assembles key works of South American contestatory public art from 1968 to 1979: a flag by Antonio Dias (Brazilian) and documentation of actions by Horacio Zabala (Argentine), Lotty Rosenfeld (Chilean), and CADA (Colectivo Acciones de Arte, Chilean), a group comprising Raúl Zurita, Fernando Balcells, Diamela Eltit, Lotty Rosenfeld, and Juan Castillo.

The exhibition foregrounds a historical moment inseparable from political repression and brutality, which gave rise to symbolic and often surreptitious modes of artistic production. Throughout South America, military dictatorships rose and fell with backing from the Cold War-era Operation Condor, a US foreign policy platform referenced in the show's title, whose disastrous consequences transformed daily life—and contemporary art practices. Where artists could not explicitly represent violent realities, they turned to allusive and public interventions to mount dissent. As such, this presentation invokes Alexander Kluge's notion of the "counter-public sphere," a critical response to Jürgen Habermas's concept of the "public sphere" of social life, to describe works that undermine authoritarian control through indirect but publicly visible means.

Rather than depict acts of oppression or torture, the artists in the exhibition allude to social and political events through poetically succinct and open-ended gestures. For Rosenfeld's *Una milla de cruces sobre el pavimento* (A Mile of Crosses on the Pavement), the artist adhered strips of fabric perpendicularly across the dotted lines of strategically selected streets, forming



crosses, plus signs, or X's. In *300 metros de cinta negra para enlutar una plaza pública* (300 Meters of Black Tape to Mourn a Public Square), Zabala mounted a somber public memorial to a group of sixteen dissidents who were brutally executed by Argentina's government. In *Inversión de Escena* (Scene Inversion), CADA orchestrated a procession of milk trucks to Santiago de Chile's National Museum of Fine Arts to comment on cultural censorship. Meanwhile, Dias's stark flag *Tapa Olho* (Eye Patch) denounces how nationalist discourse obscures social realities. In our contemporary context, amid widespread social division and public protest in the United States and globally, these works remind us of art's formidable ability to confront those in power when democracy is under threat.

A publication, available at ISLAA's space and as a [PDF download](#), and featuring essays by Nicolás Guagnini and Tobi Maier, accompanies *The Counter-Public Sphere in the Condor Years*. ISLAA is also pleased to share copies of Horacio Zabala's *300 metros de cinta negra para enlutar una plaza pública 1972–2012* (300 Meters of Black Tape to Mourn a Public Square 1972–2012), a hardbound bilingual book documenting one of the featured artworks. *The Counter-Public Sphere in the Condor Years* is on view at ISLAA from October 15, 2020, through January 15, 2021. Visits are by appointment only, and ISLAA requires guests to follow COVID-19 precautions while on-site. For further information, please contact Olivia Casa, Exhibition and Curatorial Manager, at olivia.casa@islaa.org.

About the Curator

Argentine-born, New York-based artist and writer Nicolás Guagnini has exhibited worldwide. His artwork is in the permanent collections of the Whitney Museum of American Art, the Museum of Modern Art of Buenos Aires and São Paulo, the Philara Collection in Düsseldorf, and other private and public collections. He is a cofounder of the experimental film company Union Gaucha Productions, whose films are in the collections of the Centre Pompidou, the Museum of Modern Art in São Paulo, and the Stuki Museum in Poland. Guagnini has published his writing in *October*, *Artforum*, *Texte Zur Kunst*, and exhibition catalogues for the Museum of Modern Art and the Whitney Museum of American Art, among other places. He has curated exhibitions at the Centro Cultural Ricardo Rojas in Buenos Aires and at the Museum of Modern Art, Miguel Abreu Gallery, Bortolami Gallery, and Orchard in New York.

About ISLAA's Exhibitions Program

ISLAA is proud to present its new exhibitions program on modern and contemporary Latin American art. Inaugurated with *Ulises Carrión: The Big Monster*, curated by Aimé Iglesias Lukin, in 2019, this initiative continues ISLAA's mission of advancing

scholarship on art from Latin America. It consists of an interrelated series of physical exhibitions in ISLAA's New York City gallery space and online presentations on its website. Guest curators are invited to draw from ISLAA's library, archive, and graphic arts collection to develop original research and realize new exhibitions that consider underexamined figures, areas, and periods. This program seeks to foster curatorial innovation within the field and to offer scholars, curators, and arts professionals the opportunity to realize exceptional projects that will generate further interest in modern and contemporary Latin American art.

About ISLAA

The Institute for Studies on Latin American Art ([ISLAA](#)) was established in 2011 in order to increase the visibility of Latin American art on a global scale. Since its creation, it has played an international role in fostering advanced research in this field. ISLAA sponsors [lectures and symposia](#) given and organized by renowned scholars, contemporary artists, and graduate students. It supports [publications](#) that include academic volumes, exhibition catalogues, and artists' books, as well as groundbreaking [exhibitions](#) on modern and contemporary Latin American art.