150 Antonio Ruiz, *Dream of Malinche*, 1939, oil on canvas, 30 × 40 cm.
Mexico City, Galería de Arte Mexicano.

The Galería de Arte Mexicano and Pathways for Mexican Surrealism in the United States

Rachel Kaplan

In March 1935, the Galería de Arte Mexicano (GAM) opened in Mexico City to advance the production and sale of modern Mexican art. From its inception, GAM aimed to place this art within a larger international panorama. Though dedicated to artists living and working in Mexico, the gallery envisioned a broader outreach for its audience. The gallery's founding mission statement announced its intention to "attract people interested in Mexican art, especially tourists among whom there already exists an affection towards Mexico's visual arts."[1] Accordingly, the gallery reached out to travel agencies and foreign consulates and soon began organizing exhibitions to send abroad. This essay explores the history of GAM's promotion of Mexican works with surrealist tendencies within its larger program of fostering transnational connections with museums and galleries in the United States in its first decade.[2]

GAM's activities at the time must be understood both within the historical context of displaying modern Mexican art and through the concerted efforts of gallery director Inés Amor as she cultivated relationships with artists, collectors, and institutions to sustain the gallery at the local and international level. Though its specific legacy has been debated, the "International Exhibition of Surrealism" (1940) constitutes a landmark event in GAM's early years, both within histories of Mexican modernism and international surrealism alike. This essay first considers the significance of this exhibition to GAM and the gallery's artists, and

1 "Estatutos para abrir la galería," in Delmari Romero Keith, ed., *Historia y testimonios: Galería de Arte Mexicano* (Mexico City: Ediciones GAM, 1985), p. 17: "[A]traer a ella a las personas interesados en el arte mexicano, especialmente a los turistas entre los cuales existe ya una corriente de simpatía por las artes plásticas de México." Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own.

2 This essay developed from a paper given at the workshop "Networks, Museums and Collections: Surrealism in the United States" at the Deutsches Forum für Kunstgeschichte, Paris, November 27–29, 2017. I would like to thank the editors for their insightful comments and suggestions in revising this essay for publication.

then proceeds to discuss its role in presenting a pathway for introducing Mexican art abroad. In the years following the show, Amor strengthened GAM's networks in the United States to support her emerging artists and present alternatives to the established muralists who were better known there. Drawing on GAM's rich archives, the final section of the text traces the reception of Mexican works with surrealist tendencies through an examination of museum and gallery exhibitions in the United States. The highlighting of surrealist connections provided one strategy for showing the variety of styles present in Mexican easel painting, which Amor championed as the height of Mexican artistic production.

Birth of a gallery and Mexican art networks

The Galería de Arte Mexicano quickly emerged as a cultural gathering place in Mexico City and set its sights on a larger geographic network. Carolina Amor founded GAM after she left her post in the Ministry of Public Education's Department of Fine Arts following changes in government policies affecting the arts. In 1934 José Muñoz Cota assumed leadership of the department from the composer Carlos Chávez. In line with the cultural populism of Lázaro Cárdenas's newly established presidency, Muñoz Cota denounced easel painting among other activities seen as bourgeois and elitist.[3] With many of her programs now cut, Carolina Amor resigned, taking her pension and the connections she had formed with artists to create GAM. The gallery first opened in the mezzanine of the Amor family home, located near the Paseo de la Reforma, one of the city's main thoroughfares.[4] Within a year GAM was under the directorship of Carolina's younger sister, Inés, who received her training on the job and looked to the artists for guidance, advice, and an education in the arts (fig. 147).[5] While the gallery supported a range of art forms, including drawing, printmaking, photography, and sculpture, Inés Amor gave priority to exhibiting easel painting in accordance with her sister's founding motives and in response to the shortage of existing opportunities to display these works.

3 "Carolina Amor," in Romero Keith, *Historia y testimonios* (note 1), pp. 1–21, here pp. 1–2. For more on Muñoz Cota and the early years of the Cardenista Department of Fine Arts, see Dafne Cruz Porchini, "El Departamento de Bellas Artes y las exposiciones de carteles de 1934 y 1935," *Revista Digital CENIDIAP*, no. 3 (2005), http://discursovisual.net/dvweb03/agora/agodafcruz.htm, accessed February 12, 2019.

4 Romero Keith, "Carolina Amor" (note 1), pp. 2–3. From its opening in March 1935 until 1938, the Galería de Arte Mexicano was located at Calle Abraham González 66, the Amor family home. After the family moved in late 1937, Inés Amor searched for alternative locations and moved the gallery nearby to Calle General Prim 104.

5 Ibid., p. 15.

147 Lola Álvarez Bravo, *Inés Amor.* Tucson, AZ, The University of Arizona, Center for Creative Photography.

Though GAM is often recognized as the first commercial gallery for modern art in Mexico, other venues anticipated its opening. Frances Toor, a publisher of magazines and travel guides and an early promoter of Mexican art in the United States, displayed paintings in her Mexico City office. Similarly, Greek-born Alberto Misrachi sold art out of his bookstore, the Librería Misrachi.[6] Though Misrachi's arrival preceded GAM by only a few years, he provided Inés Amor with early financial support and professional guidance, becoming a friend and collaborator.[7] While Misrachi and Toor sold art, this was not their primary endeavor. Without an established customer base, commercial art ventures struggled. In the beginning Amor took on extra work to support her gallery, editing the social pages of the *Excélsior* newspaper and teaching children's English classes.[8] Additionally, GAM probably benefited from the social connections of the Amors, an aristocratic land-owning family whose members endeavored to maintain their distinguished social status following the loss of their properties during the Mexican Revolution.

6 Later the Central Art Gallery and Central de Publicaciones. For more on Misrachi, see Luis Geller, *Alberto Misrachi Galerista. Una vida dedicada a promover el arte de México* (Mexico City: Sylvia Misrachi, 1998).

7 Letter from Inés Amor to Betty Pirie, January 19, 1935, Correspondencia privada de Inés Amor 1937, Galería de Arte Mexicano Archives, Mexico City (hereafter cited as GAM Archives).

8 Jorge Alberto Manrique and Teresa del Conde, eds., *Una mujer en el arte mexicano. Memorias de Inés Amor* [1987] (Mexico City: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 2005, 2nd ed.), pp. 41–42.

After assuming leadership of GAM, Amor worked to solidify her base of artists, signing many of them to exclusive contracts. By offering a monthly allowance in exchange for a set number of works and right of refusal, Amor granted artists economic stability for the development of their art. Amor's efforts to formalize the sale and exchange of art through contracts point to GAM's intentions to achieve a sustained presence in Mexico. She earned official recognition from the Mexican government when she was selected to assemble contemporary paintings to send to the San Francisco Golden Gate International Exposition and the New York World's Fair, both in 1939 and 1940.[9] While GAM was founded as an alternative to government-sponsored spaces, this recognition signaled a changing relationship with official arts agencies and bolstered Amor's relations with exhibition organizers in the United States.[10] Around the same time, the gallery's foreign ambitions received an additional boost from mounting the "International Exhibition of Surrealism."

"Apparition of the Great Sphinx of the Night": European surrealism comes to GAM

On January 17, 1940, visitors dressed in their finest attire poured into GAM to attend the opening of the "International Exhibition of Surrealism." The gallery had recently relocated to a larger space and the event served as a dual inauguration of the exhibition and the new venue.[11] As promised on the evening's invitations, which were carefully burnt around the edges, the lights went out and an illuminated great sphinx appeared, wearing a butterfly mask designed by Wolfgang Paalen that recalled his painting *Toison d'Or* (1937).[12] The performance linked the "International Exhibition of Surrealism" to previous iterations in Copenhagen, London, and Paris.[13] The title page of the exhibition

9 See *Golden Gate International Exposition. Contemporary Art. Official Catalog*, exh. cat. (San Francisco: San Francisco Bay Exposition Company, 1939), p. 30; and correspondence in the GAM Archives in folders on the Golden Gate International Exposition 1939, the Golden Gate International Exposition San Francisco 1940, and the Exposición para la pabellón de México en la Feria Mundial de Nueva York.

10 Amor worked for the Golden Gate International Exposition under the auspices of Mexico's Department of Fine Arts in the Ministry of Public Education, and was commissioned by the Ministry of the Economy for the exhibition at the 1939 New York World's Fair.

11 The gallery had moved to Calle Milán 18, where it remained for the next five decades until moving again in 1991 to its present location at Gobernador Rafael Rebollar 43.

12 Manrique and del Conde, *Una mujer en el arte mexicano* (note 8), p. 112. See also Olivier Debroise, *Figuras en el trópico, plástica mexicana 1920–1940* (Barcelona: Ediciones Océano, 1984), p. 184.

13 For connections between the performance at the Mexican inauguration and the earlier shows, see Luis M. Castañeda, "Surrealism and National Identity in Mexico. Changing Perceptions, 1940–1968," *Journal of Surrealism and the Americas*, no. 3/1–2 (2009), pp. 9–29, here pp. 11–13; and Ida Rodríguez Prampolini, *El surrealismo y el arte fantástico de México* (Mexico City: UNAM,

catalogue announced both the "apparition of the great sphinx" and the "burnt invitations," along with "clairvoyant watchets [*sic*]," "perfume of the fifth dimension," and "radioactive frames."[14] This act recalled the show's Parisian precedent and suggested the inclusion of additional realms, senses, and dimensions in the installation.[15]

Organized in Mexico by Paalen and the Peruvian César Moro in coordination with André Breton in Paris, the exhibition featured European works supplemented by local additions (fig. 148). According to Dr. Salomon Grimberg, who frequented GAM as a student, when Paalen approached Amor about hosting the exhibition, she immediately realized that it would convert her gallery into a participant in the international scene and that she would gain a platform to show the best of

148 Photographer unknown, installation view of the "Exposición Internacional del Surrealismo," Mexico City, Galería de Arte Mexicano, 1940. Mexico City, Galería de Arte Mexicano.

1969), p. 55. Other recent publications that study this important exhibition are Dafne Cruz Porchini and Adriana Ortega Orozco, "The 1940 International Exhibition of Surrealism. A Cosmopolitan Art Dialogue in Mexico City," *Dada/Surrealism*, no. 21/1 (2017); and Daniel Garza Usabiaga, "La Exposición Internacional del Surrealismo en México como fracaso (1940). Una reconsideración," in Dafne Cruz Porchini, Claudia Garay Molina, and Mireida Velázquez Torres, eds., *Recuperación de la Memoria Histórica de Exposiciones de Arte Mexicano (1930-1950)* (Mexico City: UNAM, 2016), pp. 33–44.

14 *Exposición Internacional del Surrealismo*, exh. cat. (Mexico City: Ediciones GAM, 1940). I have not yet found additional accounts of these final three elements.

15 The title page to the French exhibition catalogue listed "*Plafond chargé de 1.200 sacs à charbon, Portes 'Revolver,' Lampes Mazda, Échos, Odeurs du Brésil* et le reste à l'avenant." Emphasis in original: *Exposition internationale du surréalisme*, exh. cat. (Paris: Galerie des Beaux-Arts, 1938).

Mexican easel painting.[16] Later in her memoirs, Amor would credit the surrealist exhibition as the event that brought interest to Mexican art and established Mexico City as an artistic and cultural center within the international avant-garde.[17]

Despite the foundational importance of the exhibition ascribed by these memories, surrealist ideas had a presence in Mexico before the exhibition. Breton traveled to Mexico in 1938, when he famously dubbed Mexico as the surrealist country par excellence and cemented Mexico's place in the imagination of the European movement.[18] Upon his return to Paris, Breton wrote of his experience in the surrealist journal *Minotaure*, and mounted "Mexique" at the Galerie Renou et Colle, an exhibition that included works by Frida Kahlo and Manuel Álvarez Bravo, as well as Mesoamerican objects, paintings from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and popular art that he had collected during his travels.[19] While Antonin Artaud had visited Mexico two years before Breton, European surrealism had found its way to the country before the arrival of these two visitors. Artists such as Agustín Lazo had spent time in Paris, encountering surrealist artists and ideas. Associated back home with a group known as the Contemporáneos, Lazo sent images of his work as well as reproductions of pieces by Giorgio de Chirico and Salvador Dalí for publication in the group's journal of the same name.[20] Coinciding with Breton's visit, Lazo translated key texts for a special issue of *Letras de México* and wrote an overview of surrealist painting for *Cuadernos de Arte*, disseminating ideas of European surrealism in Mexico.[21]

Lazo was among the Mexican artists Paalen selected for the "International Exhibition of Surrealism." Amor acknowledged that Paalen had invited the Mexican artists to participate as a "courtesy toward Mexico," however the precedent existed for including local artists in international exhibitions.[22] The catalogue's checklist presented the international artists first and without a heading in a grouping of ninety-two works by

16 Salomon Grimberg, "Los días de la calle de Gabino Barreda," in Evelyn Useda Miranda, Víctor Mantilla González, Arturo López Rodríguez, Jessica Martín del Campo, and Mariana Casanova Zamudio, eds., *Surrealismo. Vásos Comunicantes* (Mexico City: Ediciones El Viso/Museo Nacional de Arte, 2012), pp. 283–298, here p. 292. Grimberg began working at GAM while he was in medical school and quickly became a permanent fixture there. Dr. Salomon Grimberg, telephone interview with the author, June 5, 2011.

17 Manrique and del Conde, *Una mujer en el arte mexicano* (note 8), p. 112.

18 Rafael Heliodoro Valle, "Diálogo con André Breton," *Universidad de México*, June 1930, pp. 5–8, published in Rodríguez Prampolini, *El surrealismo y el arte fantástico* (note 13), pp. 53–54: "México tiende a ser el lugar surrealista por excelencia."

19 André Breton, "Souvenir du Mexique," *Minotaure*, no. 12/13 (May 1939), pp. 31–52.

20 James Oles, *Agustín Lazo* (Mexico City: UNAM, 2009), p. 49.

21 Agustín Lazo, "Reseña sobre las actividades sobrerrealistas," *Cuadernos de Arte* 3, in *Universidad. Mensual de cultura popular*, March 1938; cited in Oles, *Agustín Lazo* (note 20), pp. 61–62.

22 Manrique and del Conde, *Una mujer en el arte mexicano* (note 8), p. 111.

forty-one artists from fifteen countries.[23] Among these artists one finds Álvarez Bravo, Kahlo, and Diego Rivera, three Mexican artists who had previously exhibited in Paris and developed relationships with Breton and Paalen, and who had advocated for their inclusion in this selection.[24] The catalogue then identified automatist drawings, a surrealist object, drawings by the mentally ill, Mesoamerican ceramics and masks from Rivera's collection, objects from New Guinea from Paalen's collection, and, finally, a list of eight artists clearly designated as "Pintores de México."[25]

For the most part, the Mexican artists created new works specifically for the exhibition. The artists were all GAM veterans with the exception of Xavier Villaurutia, known primarily as a writer and leader of the Contemporáneos, and the young Guillermo Meza, for whom the surrealist exhibition marked the first public display of his work. The inclusion of Guatemalan-born Carlos Mérida and Spanish-born José Moreno Villa as Mexican painters reflects the gallery's inclusion of all artists living and working in the country in its regular programming. Lazo rounded out the Mexican contingent, along with Manuel Rodríguez Lozano, Roberto Montenegro, and Antonio Ruiz.

Local reviews of the "International Exhibition of Surrealism" quickly noted that the Mexican artists included were not surrealists, a distinction the reviewers made proudly to assert local specificity. In his review for *El Nacional*, Luis Cardoza y Aragón, who is often associated with surrealism, wrote, "The Mexicans that figure in this exhibition are not proper surrealists. And it doesn't matter!"[26] He praised the personal forms of expression he found in the works by Mérida and Lazo. Reviewer Luis G. Basurto Jr. identified Lazo's painting as the most surrealist Mexican contribution to the show, while noting that the only thing distinguishing many of the regional painters as "surrealist" was

23 Ninety-two works are listed in the first section of the catalogue and identified by artist, date, and medium. A group of *cadavres exquis*, collages, frottages, rayograms, decalcomania, fumages, and encrages are referenced but not identified, so the full number of works is not known.

24 Alice Rahon—at the time married to Paalen—later recalled that just days before the exhibition Rivera threatened to remove his works from the show if they were not included in the catalogue among the international artists: Debroise, *Figuras en el trópico* (note 12), p. 185. Interestingly, original handwritten and typewritten checklists group all of the artists together alphabetically, with no distinction made for the "Pintores de México": Checklists in Exposición Internacional del Surrealismo file, GAM Archives.

25 The surrealist object was a found nineteenth-century painting owned by Paalen. Objects by Moro, Paalen, and Meret Oppenheim appeared in the main portion of the checklist, while a preliminary note by Paalen explained that transportation difficulties had prevented the inclusion of more objects and sculptures: *Exposición Internacional del Surrealismo*, exh. cat. (note 14).

26 Luis Cardoza y Aragón, "Galería de Arte Mexicano. Exposición Surrealista," *El Nacional*, January 27, 1940, p. 5: "Los mexicanos que figuran en esta exposición no son surrealistas propiamente. ¡Ni falta que hace!"

the imposed name.[27] In denying this label, Basurto, Cardoza y Aragón, and other reviewers rejected a foreign-born movement in favor of celebrating Mexican artists for their distinctive contributions and creative personalities.

Three decades later, in her study *El surrealismo y el arte fantástico de México*, art historian Ida Rodríguez Prampolini follows this trend, distancing the local artists from the surrealist movement by defining a "fantastic art" movement specific to her country.[28] In his article "Surrealism and National Identity in Mexico: Changing Perceptions, 1940–1968," scholar Luis M. Castañeda closely scrutinizes Rodríguez's argument and highlights her stake in promoting a nationalist reading at a time when both artistic and political concerns led to a questioning of Mexican identity.[29] In so doing, Castañeda tracks the historiography of the exhibition's "critical afterlife."[30] In another moment in this "afterlife," art historian Olivier Debroise, in his study of Mexican painting, positions the surrealist exhibition as the "natural end" of a "history of the painters of a first Mexican school."[31] For Debroise, not only did the exhibition launch the gallery in the international art world, it defined the state of Mexican painting moving forward: "[I]t would be easel painting, or it wouldn't be."[32] To this end, the exhibition helped to advance the gallery's agenda of promoting easel painting. Furthermore, as the gallery began looking toward representation in the United States, the surrealist identification stuck with many of its artists—a fact due in part to Amor's savvy reading of the market.

Inroads and interventions in the United States

By the time of GAM's founding, Mexican art had a persistent presence in the United States as part of a larger cultural exchange between the two countries. Political and commercial interests on the part of both countries led to what has been recognized as a "vogue" in the United States for Mexican arts and culture.[33] In November 1922, a large exhibition of Mexican popular arts opened in Los Angeles that included a

27 Luis G. Basurto Jr., "Crítica de arte. Gran exposición surrealista internacional. I – Los pintores mexicanos," *Excélsior*, January 20, 1940, section 2, pp. 2–3.
28 Rodriguez Prampolini, *El surrealismo y el arte fantástico* (note 13).
29 Castañeda, "Surrealism and National Identity" (note 13).
30 Ibid., p. 19.
31 Debroise, *Figuras en el trópico* (note 12), p. 12.
32 Ibid., p.188: "Será de caballete o no será."
33 See Helen Delpar, *The Enormous Vogue of Things Mexican. Cultural Relations Between the United States and Mexico, 1920–1935* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1992).

small selection of modern paintings.[34] A 1928 exhibition organized by Anita Brenner for the Art Center in New York and the "Mexican Arts" show at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1930 followed this precedent, displaying modern painting alongside folk art, and, in the case of the Met, adding art from the viceregal period as well. Amor rejected these models in order to highlight modern painting. In May 1936 she organized her first loan exhibition to the United States for the Brooks Memorial Gallery in Memphis, Tennessee.[35] In 1937, she arranged an exhibition for the Arts Club of Chicago featuring the work of fourteen artists including established names such as Rivera and José Clemente Orozco, as well as emerging artists such as Lazo and Jesús Guerrero Galván. The Arts Club exhibition traveled to Minnesota and New York and was featured in popular publications such as *Life* magazine, garnering national attention.[36] Following the outbreak of World War II, both Mexico and the United States found increased impetus for strengthening their neighborly bonds, reinvigorating the use of art as a tool to promote cultural understanding in the coming years.[37]

The 1930s also brought to the United States representatives from the mural movement that emerged in Mexico during the previous decade. In 1930 José Clemente Orozco, one of "los tres grandes" of Mexican muralism, completed a mural at Pomona College in Claremont, California. The first mural by a Mexican artist in the United States, it was soon followed by murals by Diego Rivera and David Alfaro Siqueiros—the other two acclaimed "grandes." These murals facilitated recognition in the United States of the socially engaged figurative work that characterized the movement. New York galleries such as the Weyhe Gallery created and encouraged a market for prints by these artists and others, further circulating modern Mexican art.[38] While Amor capitalized on

34 Olivier Debroise, "Mexican Art on Display," in Carl Good and John V. Waldron, eds., *The Effects of the Nation: Mexican Art in an Age of Globalization* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001), pp. 20–36, here p. 26.

35 Now the Memphis Brooks Museum of Art.

36 "Revolutionary Mexican Art Show Tours the U.S.," *Life*, March 14, 1930, pp. 28–30. The exhibition traveled to the University of Minnesota, the Valentine Gallery in New York, and the Saint Paul School of Art.

37 For more on the presentation of Mexican art in the service of cultural diplomacy, see Catha Paquette, "Soft Power. The Art of Diplomacy in US-Mexican Relations, 1940–1946," in Gisela Cramer and Ursula Prutsch, eds., *¡Américas unidas! Nelson A. Rockefeller's Office of Inter-American Affairs (1940–46)* (Madrid: Iberoamericana, 2012), pp. 143–180; and Charity Mewburn, "Oil, Art, and Politics. The Feminization of Mexico," *Anales del Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas*, no. xx/72 (Spring 1998), pp. 73–136.

38 See Anna Indych-López, *Muralism without Walls: Rivera, Orozco, and Siqueiros in the United States, 1927–1940* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2009), pp. 64–74. For more on the Weyhe Gallery and its role in promoting Mexican prints in the United States, see Innis Shoemaker, "Crossing Borders. The Weyhe Gallery and the Vogue for Mexican Art in the United States," in John Ittmann, ed., *Mexico and Modern Printmaking. A Revolution in the Graphic Arts, 1920–1950*,

the recognition of these established artists, she also found opportunities to promote lesser-known painters.

Amor's involvement with another historic exhibition in 1940 continued the international momentum established by the surrealist exhibition. That February, John McAndrew, John E. Abbott, and Monroe Wheeler from New York's Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) arrived in Mexico City. Conducting research in anticipation of "Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art" scheduled to open that spring, they set up their base of operations at GAM.[39] Writing a progress report to Alfred H. Barr Jr., Abbott described the "First International Exhibition of Surrealism in Mexico" as being "enormously successful."[40] Framed in the context of improving international relations and with the cooperation of the Mexican government,[41] "Twenty Centuries" would occupy the entire New York museum, with objects spanning from before the conquest to the present day. Within the modern section, visitors to the exhibition could find a gallery devoted to Mexican works with surrealist affinities (fig. 149). Two of the paintings on view came directly from the "International Exhibition of Surrealism"—Kahlo's *The Two Fridas* (1939) and Antonio Ruiz's *Dream of Malinche* (1939). Both painted expressly for the GAM exhibition, these pieces have consequently become iconic works epitomizing Mexican engagement with surrealism. The continued pervasiveness of these two images attests to the

exh. cat. (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 2006), pp. 23–53; and Reba White Williams, *The Weyhe Gallery Between the Wars 1919–1940*, unpub. PhD diss., City University of New York, 1996.

39 McAndrew, MoMA's Curator of Architecture and Design, learned about a large retrospective of Mexican art that had been planned for the Jeu de Paume in Paris while visiting Mexico in the summer of 1939. Canceled due to wartime concerns, McAndrew relayed the plans to Alfred H. Barr Jr. and Nelson A. Rockefeller, laying the groundwork for an exhibition modeled on the Parisian plan. President of MoMA, Rockefeller had additional interests in bringing the exhibition to the museum in the hopes of easing relations with President Lázaro Cárdenas following the 1938 expropriation of oil. During a meeting in October 1938, Rockefeller introduced the idea of the exhibition to Cárdenas to improve relations between the two countries and foster feelings of goodwill. A full discussion of the history of this important MoMA exhibition and connected cultural relations is beyond the scope of this essay, but various sources are available for further reading: Holly Barnet-Sánchez, *The Necessity of Pre-Columbian Art. U.S. Museums and the Role of Foreign Policy in the Appropriation and Transformation of Mexican Heritage, 1933–1944*, unpub. PhD diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 1993; Indych-López, *Muralism without Walls* (note 38); Cathleen M. Paquette, *Public Duties, Private Interests. Mexican Art at New York's Museum of Modern Art, 1929–1954*, unpub. PhD diss., University of California, Santa Barbara, 2002; Alejandro Ugalde, *The Presence of Mexican Art in New York between the World Wars. Cultural Exchange and Art Diplomacy*, unpub. PhD diss., Columbia University, 2003.

40 Letter from John E. Abbott to Alfred H. Barr Jr., February 15, 1940, Alfred H. Barr Jr. Papers [AAA:3155;593], The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York (hereafter cited as MoMA Archives).

41 See "Foreword of the Mexican Department of Foreign Affairs," in *Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art*, exh. cat. (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1940), p. 10; also MoMA, "Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art Being Assembled for the Museum of Modern Art," press release, no. 40220-14, February 21, 1940, MoMA Archives, https://www.moma.org/documents/moma_press-release_325182.pdf, accessed February 12, 2019.

149 Photographer unknown, installation view of the exhibition "Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art," New York, The Museum of Modern Art, 1940. New York, The Museum of Modern Art Archives.

legacy and impact of both exhibitions, while the paintings themselves can be discussed concomitantly in terms of surrealist attributes or distinctly Mexican subjects.

Intimate in scale and with a miniaturist quality of detail, *Dream of Malinche* draws the viewer in for contemplation and echoes the popular art form of *retablos*, on view in a nearby room at MoMA (fig. 150). In this work, Malinche, Hernán Cortés's Indigenous lover and translator, sleeps on a bed as a colonial town arises from her recumbent body, a visual metaphor for racial and cultural mixing that she herself represents.[42] The blue sky of the landscape peels away, showing bricks in place of clouds. Ruiz's painting, simultaneously depicting the actual act of dreaming and a dreamlike scene, uses a surrealist visual language to comment on a national theme. Ruiz originally titled the work *Malinche*, and it appears in the surrealist exhibition catalogue under this name. However, according to the artist's niece, he later added "el sueño de" or "dream of" at Amor's suggestion,[43] pointing to Amor's role in framing the presentation and reception of her artists' works. Ruiz recognized

42 Rita Eder has argued that the town depicted by Ruiz is Cholula. For Eder, the female Indigenous body crowned by the archetypal colonial church is an allegory for the nation's foundation and conquest. See Rita Eder, "*El sueño de la Malinche* de Antonio Ruiz y María Magdalena: algunas afinidades," in Cuauhtémoc Medina, ed., *La imagen política: XXV Coloquio Internacional de Historia de Arte* (Mexico City: UNAM, 2006), pp. 93–112.

43 Ibid., p. 111.

151 Photographer unknown, installation view of the exhibition "Mexican Art Today," Philadelphia, Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1943. Philadelphia, Philadelphia Museum of Art.

this assistance and guidance from Amor, eventually giving her the work with the added inscription "A la reina de mis ilusiones (To the queen of my dreams)," a dual allusion to the painting as well as to the dealer and her interventions on her artist's behalf.[44]

In contrast to Ruiz's small canvas, Kahlo's *The Two Fridas* dwarfed the other works in the room, creating an aura of prominence. A press release for the exhibition described Kahlo as "the surrealist with a complex and morbid imagination."[45] By emphasizing Kahlo as both distinctly Mexican and a recognized surrealist painter, the press statement echoed the identity struggle at play in *The Two Fridas*.[46] Kahlo also painted *The Wounded Table* (1939) for the GAM exhibition, and this work was likewise sent to MoMA for display. However, its large size became an issue, making it the only modern work shipped to New York that the organizers decided not to hang.[47] Instead, the painting was sent to the Julien Levy Gallery—where Kahlo had her first solo show in the United States in 1938—and was replaced at MoMA by the smaller *What the Water Gave Me* (1938).[48]

44 Ibid.
45 Press release, Department of Circulating Exhibitions Records, II.1.80.5, MoMA Archives.
46 Ibid.
47 Letter from Miguel Covarrubias to Alfred H. Barr Jr., April 27, 1940, Alfred H. Barr Jr. Papers [AAA:3155;645], MoMA Archives.
48 Ibid.

This later addition would travel again in 1943, to "Mexican Art Today," a survey organized by Amor for the Philadelphia Museum of Art (PMA). Amor worked with Henry Clifford, Philadelphia's curator of paintings, to bring together the best examples of Mexican painting from the previous thirty years, as well as drawings, prints, and photographs. While including a painting by Orozco related to his Pomona College mural and portable frescoes by Rivera, Amor and Clifford strove to shift the focus toward easel painting, positioning the latter as the height of contemporary Mexican artistic expression. Within this context, one of the rooms highlighted a new generation of artists that depicted alternate and fantastic realities (fig. 151). Here, Kahlo's bathtub hung alongside paintings by Ruiz and Carlos Mérida, both participants in the surrealist exhibition at GAM, as well as works by young artists who emerged immediately after the 1940 show.

By forming close personal relationships with curators such as Clifford, Amor was able to influence the display and acquisition of works by her artists. The exhibition provided a catalyst for the PMA's collection of modern Mexican art. Nearly a quarter of the works in "Mexican Art Today" entered the museum's permanent collection and several others entered private collections in Philadelphia and New York. Carl Zigrosser, curator of the PMA's newly founded print department, arranged the purchase of sixty-five prints directly from the exhibition.[49] Clifford, who during the course of the exhibition bought works from Amor destined to enter the museum's collection, similarly inspired members of the museum's patronage circles to purchase works as gifts.[50] Encouraged by this spur of giving, in June 1945 Clifford wrote to Amor, "Bit by bit I am building up a Mexican group and having two special galleries built and painted to receive them."[51]

Following the positive press and sales generated by these museum exhibitions, by the fall of 1943 Amor was contemplating opening a branch of GAM in New York.[52] The imagined outpost would give her stable of artists a persistent New York presence. While this permanent location never came to fruition, in November 1945 Amor found an alternative with an exhibition at the Knoedler Galleries on East Fifty-

49 Anne d'Harnoncourt and William D. Chiego, "Preface," in Ittmann, *Mexico and Modern Printmaking* (note 38), pp. iii–ix, here p. iii. Zigrosser also purchased prints for his personal collection which would eventually enter the museum as well, in 1972 and 1976.

50 I have written in greater depth on the impact of *Mexican Art Today* on the PMA's collection elsewhere. See Rachel Kaplan, "Mexican Art Today. Inés Amor, Henry Clifford and the Shifting Practices of Exhibiting Modern Mexican Art," *Journal of Curatorial Studies*, no. 3/2+3 (2014), pp. 264–288; and Rachel Kaplan, *Mexican Art at Home and Abroad. The Legacy of Inés Amor and the Galería de Arte Mexicano*, unpub. PhD diss., New York University, 2015, pp. 131–135.

51 Letter from Henry Clifford to Inés Amor, June 6, 1945, Henry Clifford file, GAM Archives.

52 Letter from Henry Clifford to Inés Amor, October 23, 1943, Henry Clifford file, GAM Archives.

152 Juan Soriano, *Girl with Mask* (alternately titled *Infinite Space*), 1945, oil on canvas, 80.3 × 100.3 cm. Philadelphia, Philadelphia Museum of Art.

Seventh Street. As an extension of the Galería de Arte Mexicano, issues that permeated and characterized the Mexican art scene were transposed directly to the New York show. The Knoedler exhibition featured figurative works that teetered between the real, surreal, and abstract. It included the established painters Siqueiros and Rufino Tamayo, both well known in New York, and an additional eleven artists identified as being part of Mexican art's younger generation. The Knoedler catalogue, with biographies submitted by Amor, emphasized the youth of these artists and positioned them as the future of Mexican painting.

Identified in the catalogue as "one of the most promising young artists in Mexico," Juan Soriano exemplifies the rising generation that Amor promoted.[53] While the young Soriano did not participate in the "International Exhibition of Surrealism," he is recorded as being at the inaugural evening.[54] In reviewing the Knoedler exhibition for *ARTnews*, critic Rosamond Frost notes that Soriano "seems to combine the power of the older social crusaders with a disturbing, often surreal imagery."[55] Yet Soriano himself would later emphatically deny surrea-

53 *Mexican Painting*, exh. cat. (New York: Knoedler Galleries, 1945).
54 "Exposición surrealista," *Excélsior*, January 20, 1940, section 2, p. 2.
55 Rosamond Frost, "Mexicana of the Moment," *ARTnews*, no. 44 (November 15, 1945), p. 23. Frost later became better known as Rosamond Bernier, an established lecturer on art.

list connections, recalling the same refusal by Mexican critics in 1940.[56] His dreamlike paintings from the period inhabit ambiguous spaces on the threshold of reality and fantasy, evident in his contributions to the Knoedler show. In *Infinite Space* (1945), a young girl tries on a mask accompanied by a playful monkey and chaperone (fig. 152). The apparent sky behind her peels away to reveal a brick wall, confusing what is indoors and what is outdoors, what is real and what is artifice. A recurring device in Soriano's work, this interplay is reminiscent of Ruiz's *Dream of Malinche*.

Sales records provide helpful evidence as to how the two galleries worked together, and serve to further illustrate the Knoedler Galleries' role as an extension of GAM. In 1946 Amor wrote to Lelia Wittler at Knoedler after hearing that someone was interested in purchasing a painting by Soriano: "I hope it will be *Infinite Space* since the *Massacre* piece has an offer here of $1,000.00. In any case, do not sell *Massacre* for less than a thousand."[57] Following Amor's wishes, Wittler sold *Infinite Space* to Mrs. Herbert Cameron Morris and left *Massacre* for Amor to sell in Mexico.[58] Morris was a member of the PMA's painting committee, and following "Mexican Art Today" bought the two portable frescoes by Diego Rivera that were on view to donate to the museum. Maintaining an interest in Mexican art, she traveled to New York at Clifford's behest to see the Knoedler show, where she purchased the Soriano. Clifford wrote Amor to tell her the news: "I got a friend of mine, Mrs. Herbert Morris, to go to N.Y. and see your show. I told her of Juan's *Two Figures + Monkey*—or whatever the official title is—and she fell in love with it and bought it."[59] Morris donated this painting to the PMA as well in 1947, the same year she purchased another Soriano from Amor by way of the Knoedler Galleries, which would enter the PMA's collection ten years later.[60]

As intimated in the correspondence outlined above, Amor built her network of museums and collectors through chains of personal connections, and her relationships with other galleries proved no exception. Betty Pirie, a collector and friend of Amor's based at the time in New

56 Stated in an interview with Edward J. Sullivan, published in Edward J. Sullivan, *Fragile Demon. Juan Soriano in Mexico, 1935 to 1950* (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 2008), p. 35. Sullivan goes on to explore Soriano's surrealist affinities and the tendency to discuss to Soriano under the label of Mexican surrealism, pp. 35–42.

57 Letter from Inés Amor to Lelia Wittler, November 19, 1946, Knoedler 1945 file, GAM Archives.

58 Born Willarene Sober, she gave several works to the PMA. She is listed in the credit lines of these gifts as Mrs. Herbert Cameron Morris.

59 Letter from Henry Clifford to Inés Amor, December 15, 1945, Henry Clifford file, GAM Archives.

60 The PMA now calls the painting *Girl with Mask*. The second Soriano that Morris bought and gifted, titled in 1947 *The White Tablecloth*, is now identified as *Girl with Bouquet*.

York, facilitated the early stages of the Knoedler collaboration.[61] Amor's network of collaborating galleries expanded in New York thanks to a keen interest in Mexican art and Amor's established reputation. Frost's previously mentioned *ARTnews* article identified the enthusiasm for Mexican art as the "Mexicana of the Moment," noting two exhibitions occurring concurrently just blocks away from the 1945 Knoedler show.[62] On November 1, 1945, the Kleemann Galleries opened an exhibition of eighteen works on paper by Mexican artists. An additional show featured recent works by Carlos Mérida at the Nierendorf Galleries. While Kleemann did not collaborate with Amor, a version of the Nierendorf show had hung on the walls of the Galería de Arte Mexicano nine months earlier, in February 1945.[63] Amor sent Nierendorf thirteen paintings from her Mérida show that applied elements of the abstract and surreal to Mesoamerican themes, leading Frost to praise Mérida's fusion of modern visual languages with ancient traditions.[64]

The connection between the two Mérida exhibitions presents another model for reconstructing GAM's extended network. In the 1940s GAM favored one-artist shows, with unsold works often traveling together as a new iteration of the exhibition to galleries in the United States. In another example, an exhibition of works by the French-born surrealist Alice Rahon originated at GAM in March 1944 and continued on to the Stendahl Galleries in Los Angeles in March 1945 and Peggy Guggenheim's Art of This Century in New York the following May. Amor organized a second exhibition of works by Rahon in September 1946, which she then sent to be shown at Nierendorf. Rahon had arrived in Mexico in 1939 with Paalen and contributed four watercolors to the "International Exhibition of Surrealism," the first public display of her visual work and the start of her ongoing relationship with Amor. Mexican reviews of her two GAM shows discuss Rahon's work in terms of both surrealism and abstraction. One 1946 review praises Rahon as a champion of surrealism before describing how she used the new language of abstraction to create her fantasy worlds.[65] Mérida

61 Letter from Carman Messmore to Betty Pirie, May 19, 1945, Knoedler 1945 file, GAM Archives.

62 Frost, "Mexicana of the Moment" (note 55), p. 23.

63 Amor wrote to Carman Messmore of Knoedler Galleries that Henry Kleemann had visited Mexico and bought a number of works from her without ever mentioning an exhibition. Letter from Inés Amor to Carman Messmore, October 12, 1945, Knoedler 1945 file, GAM Archives.

64 Frost, "Mexicana of the Moment" (note 55), p. 23. For more on Mérida's relationship to both surrealism and Mexican modernism, see Courtney Gilbert, "Negotiating Surrealism. Carlos Mérida, Mexican Art and the Avant-Garde," *Journal of Surrealism and the Americas*, no. 3/1–2 (2009), pp. 30–50. Gilbert also argues for Mérida's involvement in the short-lived Galería de Arte Moderno in Mexico City's Palace of Fine Arts (1929–31) as an early venue for showing avant-garde and surrealist works: pp. 39–43.

65 Chouchette Tourres, "Exposición en la Galería de Arte Mexicano," *Revista Mañana*, September 28, 1946, accessed in the GAM archival scrapbooks.

himself wrote the exhibition notes to accompany Rahon's 1944 show at GAM.[66] While elsewhere Rahon is discussed as a French painter,[67] Mérida firmly plants her in Mexico, highlighting her importance for expanding notions of abstraction and the avant-garde in her new home. While Rahon's work widens the notions of surrealism in Mexico, it also attests to the émigré presence there and Amor's lasting support of these artists as well, initiated with the 1940 surrealist exhibition.

That exhibition offered a platform for both Amor's young gallery and the surrealist organizers to promote their own agendas and reach new audiences, creating a mutually beneficial event. Amor capitalized on this recognition beyond Mexico, as she promoted her artists through her broadening network in the United States. There she found venues and audiences that had been primed for an interest in modern Mexican art. Building upon this base, she presented new and unfamiliar names and showed a diversity of artistic activity that included artists working with surrealist tendencies. Tracing the paths of specific works and artists through the "International Exhibition of Surrealism" to group and individual shows at museums and galleries in the United States elucidates one aspect of GAM's greater programming of Mexican modernism at large and introduces overlooked episodes of international surrealism in the United States.

66 "Alice Paalen," exh. brochure, Mexico, 1944, accessed in the GAM archival scrapbooks.
67 Tourres, "Exposición en la Galería de Arte Mexicano" (note 65).