Discussions about the circulation of surrealism and magical realism in the Americas—as well as the resistance to such discussions—have tended to revolve around largely axiomatic considerations. How might one define or delimit “magical realism,” the “marvelous real,” and “surrealism” not only from one another, but also in relation to other modes or genres of artistic creation? As artistic or literary categories, what, exactly, do such terms describe—and what are the limits of such description? Beyond terminological exhaustion alone, the tendency for such terms to reproduce assumptions about the voice and portent of contemporary art in the Americas can become restrictive, even to the point of “strangling” Latin American literature, as the Canadian Mexican novelist Silvia Moreno-García writes in a 2022 essay for *The New York Times.*

Not only have vanguard artistic and literary movements in the Americas grappled with questions about their cosmopolitan and often

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expatriate influences, but particularly in the wake of the so-called “boom” era of the 1960s and 1970s they have had to contend with the Anglo-US marketplace as well—in addition to other forms of Cold War interventionism. In her 2005 book *Ideologies of Hispanism*, critic Sylvia Molloy addresses how, in the Anglo-American context, the “magical realism imperative” has tended to relegate all Latin American literature to this lumpen category in a way that ended up reaffirming US cultural hegemony over Third World forms. The generic category of “magical realism” thus imposes a “postcolonial ‘model’ to which Latin America is expected to conform; a model whose terms have been formulated from, and in reference to, a ‘center’ whose interventions, however well intentioned, continue to be seen as imperialistic and/or simplistic.”

The premise of this special issue of *H-ART*, and this collaborative introductory essay, is to offer alternative frameworks for assessing the regional or even hemispheric repercussions of transatlantic artistic exchanges—and of inter-American and circum-Caribbean exchanges—that serve as catalysts for new intellectual and political intensities. In place of a Latin American “boom,” we propose the deliberately pluralized *tiempos para el asombro* [times of wonder] to signal the multifarious intensities of Latin American art and politics in the era of late capitalism. Characterized by duration rather than explosion, the history of intersecting experiments in artistic and political creation in the Americas is both monumental and ever-changing. Drawing on studies of Chilean and Brazilian avant-gardes, as well as anti-censorship movements in Argentina and Colombia calling for a revolution in the arts, this special issue of *H-ART* is predicated on the elasticity of approaches to “the marvelous” in twentieth and twenty-first century art. Designating an aesthetic phenomenon charged with intensity on account of its suspension of realist or otherwise hegemonic norms, the marvelous emerged in modern discourse as a function of transnational intellectual exchanges that may not always have been amicable, but which nonetheless testify to a shared commitment to aesthetic and social transformation. This special issue seeks to illuminate the plural genealogies and emergent cultural strategies that artists throughout the Americas have continued to develop over the past century, in responding to the geopolitical emergencies within and against which surrealism, magical realism, and *lo real maravilloso americano* took up their positions.

The essays collected in this special issue of *H-ART* explore continuities that often go unacknowledged when attending to the ways artists and writers across the Americas have sought to distinguish experimental art from exhausted categories, particularly in disarticulating autochthonous artistic forms and movements from the cultural imprimatur of the European avant-garde. Marking the centenary of the *Manifesto of Surrealism*, this special issue concentrates on

the entanglements between *lo real maravilloso* [the marvelous real] and the conceptual language of surrealism, both of which privilege the transformative capacity of the poetic marvelous. On account of this transformative capacity, surrealism heralded the marvelous as the basis of its aesthetic and political ambitions alike. “Let us not mince words,” the *Manifesto* states; “the marvelous is always beautiful, anything marvelous is beautiful, in fact only the marvelous is beautiful.” In a 1975 lecture—itself marking the 50th anniversary of the surrealist manifesto—Alejo Carpentier echoes this rhetoric while insisting that the marvelous is defined by discontinuity, not by beauty. “The extraordinary,” he explains, “is not necessarily lovely or beautiful. It is neither beautiful nor ugly; rather, it is amazing because it is strange. Everything strange, everything amazing, everything that eludes established norms is marvelous.” Far from proposing to reestablish such norms, this special issue invites renewed questioning about transnational investments in their continued disruption. Whom, for instance, does “the marvelous” serve in the context of mid- to late-twentieth century Latin American art, thought, and politics? To what extent does the marvelous—or the “magic” of magical realism—serve the interests of the “marketplace” so central to neoliberal ideology, or to what extent might it instead reinforce insurgent, anti- or decolonial imaginaries? How can the marvelous function as an instrument of dissident thought or emancipatory politics?

André Breton’s first *Manifesto of Surrealism* was published in Paris in 1924, but it quickly made its way around the world; the manifesto’s relationship with Latin America has remained by turns vexed and generative ever since. In 1965 the Argentine poet Aldo Pellegrini claimed to be the first to publish Breton’s manifesto in Spanish, after thirty years of failed attempts. Yet, whereas the translated *Manifesto* did not circulate in book form for some time, Latin American artists and intellectuals living in Europe during the early decades of the twentieth century had immediate access to it. Despite Pellegrini’s claim, translations of Breton’s text began appearing in Latin American cultural magazines as early as 1925. Such traffic in contemporary material was increasingly viable in the mediatiized world of the 1920s, its print culture undergirded by proliferating transatlantic travel and wireless communication. The circulation of Breton’s text also reflects the work of modern artists and writers committed to forging an international intellectual community, in spite of prevailing political and economic tensions.

In Colombia, for example, *El Espectador* published an interview with André Breton by Costa Rican writer León Pacheco in its August 1925 literary supplement. An April 1925 issue of *El gráfico* magazine ran a feature on the French surrealist poets Breton, Philippe Soupault, and Louis Aragon, which appeared in its “Literary News of the World” section. The article invokes Novalis and Edgar

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3. For an invaluable archive of primary documents in English translation, see the “Surrealism in Latin America” special issue of *Review: Literature and Arts of the Americas*. Volume 28, no. 51 (1995), which includes texts by César Moro, Octavio Paz, Julio Cortázar, Pablo Neruda, Juan Emar, Oswaldo de Andrade, and others.


Allan Poe to differentiate surrealism from nineteenth-century Romanticism, introducing its topic as the advent of a new metaphysics according to which “larval images and thoughts emerge to disturb and obsess us.”

The article’s author, Edmond Jaloux—a well-known French critic and novelist—expresses his hope that the advent of surrealism will bring a breath of fresh air into modern literature. A few decades later, the Barranquilla-based Catalan bookseller Ramón Vinyes i Cluet helped rekindle interest in the avant-garde movement under the auspices of his bookstore, R. Vinyes i Cia., and his cinema club, which showed experimental films by the likes of Luis Buñuel. Years after his death in 1952, Vinyes was memorialized by Gabriel Garcia Marquez as the Wise Old Catalan in One Hundred Years of Solitude (1967).

In Mexico, by contrast, surrealism was not received quite so unequivocally; in 1925 the journalist Genaro Estrada published an article in El Universal that proposed, for instance, that “the surrealists worked, without knowing it, on infra-reality, that is, with material they took from dreams. Their essays are childish. They refer to this as ‘analytical primitivism,’ thereby abusing the tendency to misinterpret primitivism as a lack of skill.”

A decade later, the Mexico-based Guatemalan poet Luis Cardoza y Aragón would host French writers Antonin Artaud (in 1936) and André Breton (in 1938, who came with artist Jacqueline Lamba), yielding the latter’s pronouncement that Mexico was a surrealist country par excellence—in some ways replicating Estrada’s critique of the movement’s “analytical primitivism” in ethnographic form, as Tatiana Flores discusses in her contribution to this special issue.

During and after WWII, the refugee status of numerous European surrealists played a significant role in the transatlantic and inter-American migration of concepts and artistic movements—in Mexico as throughout Latin America and the Caribbean. Such refugee artists included Eugenio Granell, Wolfgang Paalen, Alice Rahon (Paalen), Remedios Varo, Leonora Carrington, Benjamin Péret, Kati Horna, Victor Serge, Laurette Séjourné, André Breton, Jacqueline Lamba, and Pierre Mabille, among others. A number of these figures, such as Varo, Carrington, Horna, and Paalen, would spend the remainder of their lives on the American continent.

No less significant in this migration was the refugee status of many intellectuals and artists from the Americas, on account of political persecution, regime changes, disappearances, and revolutions. Peruvians César Moro and Emilio Adolfo Westphalen; Chileans Braulio Arenas, Roberto Matta, and Juan Emar (pseud. Álvaro Yáñez Bianchi); Cubans Alejo Carpentier and Wifredo Lam; Guatemalans Miguel Ángel Asturias and Luis Cardoza y Aragón—to name but a few writers and artists—arrived in Europe in the 1920s and 1930s. Even after returning from Europe, many of these figures remained in exile for

significant periods in their lives, on account of their political dissidence and the violent repercussions of regime changes. Amidst the atrocities and adversities of war, this surrealist diaspora fashioned a shared transnational sphere of artistic exchange, intellectual commitment, and political dissent alike.

The reception of surrealism—or supra-realism, as many journalists referred to it—in Latin America and the Caribbean ranged from curiosity and admiration to formal adhesion, as well as to suspicion and rejection. One of the most impassioned dialogues with surrealism in the context of the Americas was that of Alejo Carpentier, whose proposition of a distinctly American incarnation of the marvelous—the marvelous real—champions the historical and geopolitical specificity of the Americas through a hybridized intellectual genealogy. Famously, Carpentier’s prologue to his 1949 novel *El reino de este mundo* [The Kingdom of This World] both gathers and discards the accumulated motifs of European surrealism. As Carpentier writes, “by attempting to arouse the marvelous at all costs, the thaumaturges become bureaucrats. Invoked by means of all-too-well-known formulas that make certain paintings into a monotonous mess of molasses covered clocks, of seamstress’ dummies, of vague phallic monuments, the marvelous is left behind in the umbrella, the lobster, the sewing machine, wherever, on an operating table, within a sad room, a stony desert.”

Despite the confidence of its polemical tone, this prologue appeared only in the first edition of the novel and was not republished until 1967, when Carpentier reworked it for inclusion in his essay collection, *Tientos y diferencias*. In the prologue, Carpentier systematically presents an idea he had been nurturing since his first days in Paris (around 1928) when, like most intellectuals of the time, he was fascinated by the surrealists. Carpentier soon realized, however, that surrealism was not for him and began developing a theory that positioned Latin America at the center of his thinking. In contrast to the “monotonous mess” of surrealism, Carpentier’s vision of a marvelous real proper to the Americas thus derives not from literary techniques and parlor games, but from the aggregate colonial entanglements and paradoxes of the Americas in their historical and material reality. In particular, he singles out “the fecund racial mixtures [this historical and material reality] enabled,” as well as the cultural and religious forms this hybridity yielded in turn. “The marvelous real,” as Carpentier described this mode of creolization, “is found at each step in the lives of the men who inscribed dates on the history of the Continent and who left behind names still borne by the living.”

Although Carpentier initially rejected the idea of having coined a term that shared its terminology with the surrealist movement, he later found synchronicities and creative possibilities in his encounters and disagreements with surrealist thought. This dialectical relationship becomes explicit at numerous


junctures in Carpentier’s literary work. In his 1953 novel *Los pasos perdidos* [The Lost Steps], whose title invokes André Breton’s first book of essays, from 1924, the entrance portal to Santa Mónica de los Venados, the settler city built in the valley of stopped time, is marked with the letters “VVV.” *VVV* was the title of the wartime surrealist journal published in New York that brought together work by European exiles such as Breton, Marcel Duchamp, Leonora Carrington, and Marx Ernst, with work by writers and artists from the Americas, including the poets Braulio Arenas (Chile) and Aimé Césaire (Martinique), and the visual artists Wifredo Lam (Cuba), Maria Martins (Brazil), and Roberto Matta (Chile). Marking the hidden passage that opens to the narrator’s allegorical journey into the Venezuelan jungle, the brief allusion to the surrealist journal testifies both to the esoteric, transitory availability of the passage and, perhaps, to the intermediary function of wartime surrealism in marking Carpentier’s own intellectual trajectory.

Carpentier’s 1967 essay, “De lo real maravilloso americano,” proceeds from a similar gesture of departure. The essay begins: “Là-bas tout n’est que luxe, calme et volupté. The invitation to the voyage. The remote. The distant, the different.”

With this invocation of Charles Baudelaire, Carpentier summarizes the magnitude of his undertaking: to show that Latin America is not only historically and geographically removed from Europe, but also superior to it, insofar as its very historicity enables the emergence of the marvelous. According to Carpentier, the marvelous indicates both a phenomenology—describing a sensory encounter or “deregulation of the senses”—and an ontology, describing a constitutive function of lived reality in Latin America. The concept of the marvelous real at work in Carpentier’s thinking refers to “an unexpected alteration of reality (the miracle), a privileged revelation of reality, an unaccustomed or singularly favorable illumination of the previously unremarked riches of reality, an amplification of the measures and categories of reality, perceived with peculiar intensity due to an exaltation of the spirit which elevates it to a kind of ‘limit state.’” For Carpentier, this “limit state” can be experienced as a form of amplified historical awareness, whereby everyday things are perceived through an intensification of their sensory properties. In this way, Carpentier’s *marvelous* should not be understood as a secondary property of Latin American reality, but, like the entrance to Santa Mónica de los Venados in *Los pasos perdidos*, as the conduit to a revelatory disclosure of its very fundaments, at once historical and metaphysical. According to Carpentier, it is this exacerbated sensory perception that lends the everyday objects, places, and cultural practices the quality of strangeness characteristic of the marvelous, that feeling of astonishment Carpentier considers so powerful.

In “De lo real maravilloso americano” Carpentier attributes his understanding of the marvelous to the post-revolutionary cultural landscape of Haiti.
Describing his voyage to Haiti in 1943, he claims that the “magical and syncretic world” he witnessed there contained the elements the surrealists had been searching for through artificial processes; a magical reality was already evident there and did not require elaboration. It also bears mentioning that Carpentier’s invocation of the marvelous elaborates on the difference in scale and measure between the manufactured effects of surrealist process and the historical reality of Middle Passage, genocide, revolution, and hybridization. Indeed, Carpentier goes on to assert that the Latin American marvelous was rooted in “the virginity of the land, our upbringing, our ontology, the Faustian presence of the Indian and the black man, the revelation constituted by its recent discovery, its fecund racial mixing [mestizaje].” Neither essential nor natural, lo real maravilloso americano was a function of the historical conditions of colonial modernity and racial capitalism of which Carpentier was keenly aware, and which extend to the creolization of cultures he likewise attributed to Latin America. These principles became evident to him in Haiti, Carpentier claims, because he was able there to experience the living contradictions of this history in the post-revolutionary landscape of Sans Souci.

One of the aims of this special issue of H-ART is to expand the terrain of “the marvelous” in the Americas beyond the singularity of Carpentier’s framework. Yet the richness of Carpentier’s dialectic of intensified sensory perception and ingrained historicity—as well, in particular, as his complicated relationship to transnational cultural exchange, romantic primitivism, and the legacies of colonial violence—find their complement in other approaches to the transformative significance of experimental artistic engagements with the marvelous.

For the purposes of this special issue, we wish to highlight the conceptual value of Jacques-Stéphen Alexis’s 1956 lecture on “The Marvelous Realism of Haitians,” in stressing how its account of contemporary Haitian intellectual life is predicated on a language of trans-cultural solidarity. Alexis’s conception of the marvelous outlines a profound system of relations; it is anything but a token generalization of Latin American culture or a definition of a genre. Delivered at the First International Congress of Black Writers and Artists at the Sorbonne in Paris and subsequently published in Présence africaine, Alexis’s speech offers a materialist history of Haitian culture, understood as a collective and collectivizing phenomenon; its aim is to trace an ethos of artistic participation and solidarity predicated on the historicity of this culture. Rather than highlighting the value or effectiveness of a particular form of cultural production, Alexis focuses on the production of culture itself as the aggregate “commons” (communauté) of a people’s “psyches, acts, tastes, and tendencies.” The realism of Alexis’s “marvelous realism” refers, in turn, to an artwork’s continuity with the living culture.

15. Alejo Carpentier, “On the Marvelous Real in America”, 88. These lines occur in both the 1949 and 1967 versions of the text.
of a people, regardless of the artwork’s genre or medium. Because it is shaped by the same historical transformations as “the masses,” Alexis writes, a work of realistic artistic expression takes part in the worldviews, myths, and metaphysics of the people, rather than merely cataloguing everyday experience. “To hell with that all analytical, sermonizing realism that does not touch the masses,” Alexis contends, continuing: “Long live a living realism, bound up in the magic of the universe—a realism that rattles the mind, the heart, and all branches of the nervous system!” This realism becomes commensurate with “the marvelous,” in other words, insofar as it encapsulates this “living” quality of the Haitian people: “What, then, is the Marvelous, if not the imagery through which a people incorporate [enveloppe] their experience, reflect their conception of life and the world, their faith, their hope, their confidence in humankind and justice, and the explanations they find for the antagonistic forces of progress?”

By no means, Alexis argues, does a recourse to the marvelous amount to a surrender to mysticism or so-called magical thinking. Rather, it delineates the full range of human experience to which a contemporary art must address itself. For above all, Alexis’s identification of a Haitian “marvelous real” serves as a call for intellectual and artistic solidarity based on an approach to cultural work predicated on its attunement to this living reality, its capacity to “encompass all human protest against the harsh realities of life, all emotion, and the long cry of struggle, suffering, and hope borne through the works and forms transmitted by the past.” Tacitly doing away with the enduring lines of demarcation between experimental art and socialist realism, Alexis proposes that a realist art both necessarily attends to the lives of the masses (Alexis does not use the term “proletariat”) and necessarily bristles with imagination and desire in ways that exceed analytic categories.

The historical coordinates of Alexis’s account of this capacious synthesis are likewise expansive. The speech opens with a reflection on the immediate present of the Congress at which Alexis is speaking; it proceeds from an apology for the small Haitian delegation to the conference—Alexis was one of seven Haitian delegates—and broadens into an appeal for the expansion of intellectual fellowship, representation, and support in Haiti, as well as throughout the Black diaspora. From here, though, the speech then shifts its focus back to the origins of colonial modernity, dating the “past” transmitted in and through contemporary culture to a moment in the early sixteenth century, “some years after Columbus’s discovery and the invasion of the conquistadors,” a point at which “there remained but a small fraction of the Taino Indian people of Haiti.” Alexis’s insistently present-oriented account of Haitian culture thus proceeds from—or rather, incorporates—the Christian genocide as a fundamental coordinate of its contemporaneity; for this genocidal moment marks

the subsequent instigation of the Middle Passage. Tracing Haitian history from the transatlantic traffic in African lives through revolution and independence in 1804, Alexis develops his corresponding articulation of Haitian culture as the enduring synthesis of this historicity, a collectively projected “image” that spans past and present, and which thereby constitutes the “commons” of Haitian culture, in all its “psyche, actions, tastes, and tendencies.”

Notably, Alexis’s cultural historiography refuses both the kind of assimilationist position that would view Haitian culture as little more than a provincial derivative of imperial France, and the essentializing position of a fetishizing “négrisme” (as he calls it) that would view blackness as “a dynamic and profitable thing” that could be extracted from Haitian lives. Alexis’s ideas about Haitian culture are instead predicated on the independent nation’s historicity as hybridized, creolized, and multiple: “In Haiti, fiction, poetry, theatre, music, and the visual arts all bear a double heritage, at once Western and African—which is to say, a Haitian synthesis.”

For Alexis, the spirit-rattling syntheses characteristic of “marvelous realism” may be borne out in works of expressive art, but the synthesis itself is a cultural one, a phenomenon of Haitian cultural life itself.

Alexis’s speech at the 1956 Congress embodies this same “double heritage” in its own rhetorical positioning, seeking to adequate a national culture such as Haiti’s with the intentional, politicized, and transnational Black cultural solidarity associated with the event. The marvelous, living realism Alexis ascribes to Haitian cultural forms can serve as a medium for this kind of solidarity because of the very multifariousness of such synthesizing “commons”: it is neither through cosmopolitanism nor through diasporic affiliation alone that fellowship becomes possible, but instead through the confluence of different, if overlapping, hybridities. A realism that can “rattle not only the mind, but also the heart and every branch of the nervous system” bears at once the imprint of its colonial, creolized, diasporized past and its attunement to the spiritual and emotional coordinates of its living present.

The same logic enables Alexis to outline a notion of “zonal cultural confluence” throughout Latin America more broadly, whereby “there is at times a striking resemblance between the people’s reactions to reality and their social habits and emotional lives; even their art often has analogous tendencies, not only in its content, but, to a certain extent, also in its expressive form.” Such confluences become possible on account of the “relational undercurrents” of the circum-Caribbean region, Tatiana Flores and Michelle Ann Stephens’s term for the shared, overlapping histories of Caribbean art. As Alexis puts it: “the history of the Latin American people; the way they helped each other fight for independence; the aid of leaders from Dessalines and Pétion to the Mexican General Mina, to Miranda and Bolívar; the resolute Haitians who shed their
blood on Latin American ground: all this yields a confraternity that promotes cultural confluences.”

Heeding Alexis’s example, los tiempos para el asombro designate a sphere of cultural traffic—a “world discourse,” as Felicity Gee has written—in which the stakes of artistic existence became charged with an almost unprecedented geopolitico-logical urgency. The tiempos para el asombro in which world discourses of surrealism, magical realism, and experimental art converged and recombined is an era in which artistic and intellectual labor bore world-historical significance, economically as well as culturally and politically. Whereas in 1968 Roland Barthes heeded the Mallarméan “elocutionary disappearance of the author” in advocating the dawn of a readerly age, authors and artists throughout the Americas faced disappearances of a far more pernicious nature; the brutal silencing of student protests, workers’ movements, and intellectual voices rendered the capacity for artists and intellectuals to speak to international publics all the more vital. What, in short, is the charge of contemporary intellectuals and artists as cultural agents, beyond their authorial function as the creator of artworks? What are the risks as well as the affordances of engagement?

The answers to such questions continue to evolve in the face of political instability and the consolidation of systemic injustice throughout the Americas. Consonantly, los tiempos para el asombro designate an era in contemporary modernity that frustrates definitive historical periodization in its ongoing succession of revolutions, wars, structural adjustments, regime changes, decolonization movements, Cold War and Third World networks, entanglements with communism and fascism, and environmental disasters. The pluralized “times of wonder” also bear witness to radical expansions and contractions of the public sphere. Between the mythos of a “world republic of letters” and the virulent destabilization of neoliberalism’s “vampiros multinacionales,” as Julio Cortázar once put it, the second half of the twentieth century has given rise to constellations of global mediaspheres that both register and shape the destabilization and eradication of local republics, as well as struggles to preserve and re-create them in alternate form.

What does it mean to think of the world—but also of the autochthonous, the indigenous, the diasporic, and the hybrid—through the profound scalar shifts characteristic of late capitalist existence? How might one locate deep, trans-historical genealogies of historical thinking itself within the art and writing of this era? The task calls for figurations of duration and rupture alike, modes of documenting everyday lifeworlds and affective truths, as well as accounting for the nonlinear richness of artistic (as well as personal, familial, and regional) histories beyond the commonplace narratives of influence. A decade before US scholar Harold Bloom theorized about the “anxiety of influence” that characterizes an
artist’s relationship to their forebears, Jorge Luis Borges posited that “a writer creates his [sic] own precursors.” In place of either an anxiety of influence or a sovereign mode of invention, the rich—if contentious—mediascapes of the Americas both demand and propose alternative models of cultural traffic and historical transformation alike. These models stress, in turn, the renewed significance of transdisciplinary as well as transnational, polyglot practices of scholarly and artistic exchange and collaboration. In method as in practice, such dialogues register the scalar shifts between the local and the transnational, that is, between the intimacies of creative encounter and lived experience and the broad, tentacular reach of world discourse and geopolitical emergency.

Working together as an art historian and a literature scholar in bringing together this special issue of H-ART, we, the authors of this introductory essay, have aimed to bridge—if hardly to erase—the tendency for our respective fields to approach “magical realism” as a literary genre (or, perhaps more accurately, somewhere between a global literary phenomenon and a marketing category), and surrealism as a niche poetic movement or predominantly visual art form. We have instead sought to identify “relational undercurrents” that have enabled the emergence of overlapping political and aesthetic imperatives throughout the Americas, whose recourse to genealogies of experimental art and writing are at once historically specific and yet also non-linear, recursive, and anti-teleological.

Our invited author for this special issue, Katerina Gonzalez Seligmann, addresses the reception of Wifredo Lam, a Cuban painter of African, Chinese, and Spanish descent, by three major Caribbean writers: the Cuban authors Lydia Cabrera and Alejo Carpentier, and the Martinican poet-politician Aimé Césaire. Discussing each writer’s response to Lam’s “homecoming” to Cuba after nearly two decades in Europe, Seligmann examines how they situated Lam as an artist who, like themselves, returned to the Caribbean homeland. What, Seligmann asks, did it mean for these writers to encode this “consciousness of return” into their work? In discussing how Lam came to exemplify the intersections between surrealism and marvelous realism as traveling art forms, Seligmann tracks how each writer’s consciousness of return disclosed the historical—and contemporary—forms of colonial violence bound up in fantasies about the tropics.

In her article “Granell ‘extranjero’ y el grupo del Mirador Azul en Puerto Rico”, Carmina Sánchez-del-Valle addresses the cultural impact of the exiled Spanish surrealist artist and writer Eugenio Fernández Granell in Puerto Rico, where he taught during the early 1950s, after first emigrating to Guatemala. The presence of the artist in Puerto Rico was a catalyst, Sánchez-del-Valle argues, for
intellectual collaboration among a generation of Puerto Rican artists who came of age in the 1950s; a case in point being the formation of El Mirador Azul, a group founded in 1957 by former students of Granell’s whose work fused experimental art, politics, and community in the name of surrealism. Meticulously reconstructing Granell’s interactions and correspondences with the artists of El Mirador Azul, Sánchez-del-Valle illuminates the hemispheric and trans-hemispheric functioning of artistic social networks in the context of Puerto Rican avant-garde art.

In “The Chosen Land of Black Humor: André Breton’s Construction of Mexico”, Tatiana Flores examines French surrealist poet André Breton’s interest in Mexico beyond the exoticization traditionally associated with his published writings, and explores how Mexico was part of the surrealist project well before Breton visited the country in 1938.

Whereas the Colombian artist Alfonso Suárez never explicitly declared his interest in the marvelous real, nor in surrealism, Elias Doria identifies an affinity with magical thinking and popular traditions that fueled the artist’s creative impulse. In “Alfonso Suárez: vida y nada más”, Doria examines Suárez’s performance work, exploring its deep connections with popular ritual and its impact on Caribbean existence.

The notion of metamorphosis—of the potential for transformation in all that exists—has informed many of the artworks associated with magical realism and surrealism alike. In her article “Devouring Nature: On Biomorphism and Transformation in the Works of Tarsila do Amaral” Michele Greet explores how Brazilian artist Tarsila do Amaral faced the challenges of Brazil’s drive for transformation in the 1920s.

In her article on surrealism and abstraction in Chile, Lori Cole addresses how Latin American artists of the 1930s and 40s challenged many of the assumptions of European surrealism. Tracing how the (at the time) seemingly incompatible discourses of surrealism and abstraction circulated between Chile and Peru in the 1930s, Cole examines the conflicting ways in which the poets César Moro and Vicente Huidobro, as well as the artist María Valencia, positioned the group of abstract artists known as the Decembrists in their efforts to position abstract art in the context of Latin American and European artistic tendencies.

Alongside the articles collected in this special issue, Tiempos para el asombro features an invited contribution by the Brazilian poet Floriano Martins, editor of the magazine Agulha. Revista de cultura. Martín’s essay offers a rich account of the ongoing transatlantic, trans-historical dialogue between surrealist impulses in Brazil and in Europe. Martín offers readers a vibrant and at times even feverish critical-creative narrative that suspends surrealist creation from its limitation to strict parameters of time and space.
The special issue also features an interview with the artist Susana Wald, a surrealist plastic artist, writer, translator, and editor, conducted by Jonathan Eburne and María Clara Bernal. Born in Hungary and currently residing in the state of Oaxaca, Mexico, Wald has been a key figure in the global dissemination of surrealist poetry, art, and thought, through her work in Chile from the 1950s to the 1970s, and later in Canada, where she lived until emigrating to Mexico in 1994. Wald’s extensive body of creative work has recently been rediscovered by a new generation of scholars and collectors.

In the *In the Limits* section of the issue, Colombian artist María Isabel Rueda contributes a video about the artist Norman Mejía. However difficult to classify or generalize his art may be, Mejía has become a legendary figure in Colombian art on account of the visceral force of his work. The video offers a tour of the house in which Mejía lived, which he conceived of as a kind of abandoned Gothic castle whose walls nonetheless bear the artist’s traces.

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