

1987-88 CIES Fulbright

Lecture/Research Proposal

Basic Fine Art Lithographic Techniques

and

Costa Rican Contemporary Art, Aesthetics,

Theory, Praxis and Criticism

Lecture Component: In response to a direct invitation from Amparo Cruz Zuñiga, Director of the School of Visual Art of the University of Costa Rica (see attached letter) , I propose teaching a semester of basic fine art lithographic techniques and processes.

While I was in Costa Rica on a faculty exchange during the Spring of 1986 teaching painting and making a cycle of murals, it was apparent that the fine art curriculum lacks such a course, though there is equipment and the clear desire to learn about hand stone fine art lithography. During the proposed semester I will be able to impart the basic aspects of limestone, marble and aluminum plate lithographic processes, related chemistry, single and multiple color printing methods, and the curation of editions,. (please see attached sample syllabus).

I expect to be teaching several professors as well as students and other professional artists. I propose teaching this course during the spring of 1988 (January -June), after the following research project, though specific scheduling will of course be at the pleasure of the School of Art.

Please note on my vitae that I have taught this material repeatedly at Linfield College, Claremont Graduate School and Scripps College as well as having been an apprentice at Cirrus Editions Press in Los Angeles under three Tamarind Master Printers. In addition, I am an artist and employ printmaking continually in my own work. My ability to successfully complete these teaching objectives is enhanced by the prior experience I have had at the University of Costa Rica and my appreciation for the needs of the art and academic community there.

Research: I have also been invited by Virginia Vargas, Director of Museo de Arte Costarricense, to be **Scholar and Artist in Residence** to pursue a year long study of the most important ideological, practical and aesthetic issues in the work of six Costa Rican artists and art critics. The project will result in a series of transcribed interviews and the exchange of guest artists and exhibitions between Oregon and Costa Rica.

This project is a natural outgrowth of my recent volunteer work through **Compañeros de las Américas** [Partners of the Americas] as chairman of the Committee for Art and Culture exchanges between Oregon and Costa Rica. As mentioned above, I served as Artist in Residence and guest professor at The University of Costa Rica during the spring of 1986, during which time I completed a large cycle of murals in the Escuela de Artes Músicas [School of Music] in collaboration with University ethnologists and anthropologists (please see enclosed slides). As a result of these experiences I have developed a strong network of professional contacts within the art and University community which insures the success of this project.

Rationale and Relevance to the Discipline

Regarding the lecturing topic:

There is expressed desire by the Costa Ricans for technical instruction in fine art hand lithography. There is no ongoing expertise in this regard in the country, according to the Director of the School of Art and the Director of the Costa Rican Art Museum. Though intaglio printmaking techniques and woodcut are well developed, lithography has received sporadic attention. It is the hope of the Director of the School of Art, that my instruction will result in continuing knowledge and practice in this area.

Regarding the research topic:

As a guest professor at the University of Costa Rica, I was struck with the lack of mutual understanding between North American art intellectuals and their counterparts in Latin America. There is a very real and lamentable shortage of discussion and exposure relative to shared values among working artists north and south. I frequently meet North American artists and academics with little or no knowledge of Latin American intellectual activity in terms of art, and a corresponding, though more frustrated level of underexposure in Costa Rica. Both groups know more about contemporary European issues and artists than those of each other. I am interested in investigating the range of visual art forms and the relative pressures that bear on the practice of visual art, the role and pressure of professionalism, and finally the ideological influences that form the working environment within the art communities.

Methodology:

1. In consultation with Costa Rican and later with Oregon curators, I will select six artists and at least one critic from each region to interview several times concerning a range of topics. These artists will include:

- (a) those who are principally active exhibiting artists.
- (b) those that teach art as a primary vocation.
- (c) those that work seriously without significant commercial or academic stimulus.
- (d) active publishing critics who focus on the visual arts.

2. To develop relevant questions to ask of each artist regarding:

- (a) sensibility, creative motivation, philosophies of creativity, and notions of spiritual, social and/or historical significance.
- (b) sources of imagery.
- (c) professional considerations, market pressures, opportunities, kinds of galleries and museum support.
- (d) sources of financial support, patronage.
- (e) ideological issues that influence the identity and social function of the artist within the larger context of the country and community. Community interest and interaction with artists.

- (f) studio practices.
- (g) training and education.
- (h) attitudes about internationalism in the arts.
- (i) attitudes about stylistic regionalism and the problem of national and international identity.

3. To utilize the invitation of the Museum and its good offices and curatorial staff. I have been promised office space to set up my computer with which to accumulate data, record translations of interviews, and write a forward to the manuscript. I am also promised the logistical and translation help of artist and professor Carmen Borrásé Povedano as a special project assistant, as well as the directors of the University Art Department, the Costa Rican Art Museum and Plaza de la Cultura. I will also have the collective help of the Costa Rican Patners of the Americas committee for art and culture.

Results:

To transcribe edited bilingual versions of the interviews for publication. I will be writing an extended essay as a forward to the manuscript and have secured a promise of a reciprocal essay by the aforementioned Lic. Virgina Vargas, Directora del Museo de Arte Costarricense. I will be asking Partners of the Americas or other agencies or foundations for a separate grant for this publication. I also intend to take high quality photos of each artist and their work, and hopefully to make short video-tape segments for airing on public access television in Oregon and Costa Rica. Such a video-tape would also be used during the reciprocal exhibitions of art and artists between Oregon and Costa Rica. This aspect of the project will likely be funded through **Partners of the Americas** as part of intercultural exchanges during 1988. It may also be possible to exchange artists as well as works of art for a bicultural conference on the arts. I want to make it clear that ten months in Costa Rica will be adequate time to complete the Costa Rican half of the entire comparative project, and that the reciprocal U.S. half will be completed during the following year as a part of regular Partners of the Americas activity. This project will aid immeasurably in the planning, value and vitality of future artistic exchanges through Partners of the Americas as well as provide insight into unresearched aspects of inter-American visual art issues.

Career Relevance:

My career as an artist seems to be taking a natural turn toward Latin America. In recent years much of my work as a painter has been inspired by my travels through Mexico, and since painting the ethnological mural *El espíritu de música indígena* (see slides) while in residence this spring I deepened an interest in the intellectual life, aesthetic criterion and creative work of those artists of the region. I have written as an art critic in Los Angeles in the past (see vitae) and currently teach contemporary art theory at Linfield College in addition to painting and printmaking. I have an increasingly uncomfortable realization that the art historical, and aesthetic survey I provide, and that which I received during my own education is partial and ignores broad issues not directly related to European and North American history and contemporary art. I wish to now address this deficiency. I have mentioned my work through Partners of the Americas in arranging exchanges of poets, artists and other cultural agents. I regard this administrative opportunity as an excellent chance to advance inter-American understanding. I should also point out that I am invited to mount a major comprehensive exhibition of my work at Museo de Arte Costarricense during 1988, which further illustrates my commitment to the topic. For further comments regarding the career relevance of this proposal, please see the attached 'Career

Narrative'.

Language Proficiency:

Though I have been studying Spanish for only a few years, I have spent significant time in Mexico and Costa Rica. I currently have frequent opportunities to converse with native Spanish speakers at Linfield College through our very active international program, and I continually write and receive letters in Spanish through my interactions on behalf of Partners of the Americas.

I have had intensive language instruction in Mexico and Costa Rica, and will be taking more in January 1987 at Instituto Allende, in San Miguel de Allende, Mexico. I feel that I have the required ability to conduct this project, especially with the able assistance of Profesora Carmen Borrásé and Lic. Virginia Vargas. Though not fluent, I am able to teach, write, ask intellectual questions and respond in kind. I am committed to acquiring fluency during this year of study. Please note that the Fulbright Program listing for this lectureship asks only for **basic** skill. This I clearly have now. I will be surpassing this stage during the months to come. A language proficiency form will be filed as requested.

Prior Research:

My 1986 work in Costa Rica was related to a faculty exchange program funded through the Tinker and Northwest Area Foundations. Intensive language study was supported through the Tinker Foundation. The mural project involved extensive research in collaboration with University anthropologists, ethnomusicologists, ethnologists, native indios, artists and museum curators.

I hold a **Master of Fine Arts** with a graduate minor in Philosophy from Claremont Graduate School, which is the **terminal degree** in my discipline suitable for a university level career. Appropriate to my discipline, I am a combination scholar and artist. I assume, as is customary, that you will view my many bodies of visual art as equivalent to written research. As an art critic I have interviewed many artists along the lines of the stated project methodology, and have written about related issues. I feel confident that I am well prepared to conduct this project, and in fact, should point out that as a practicing artist, seasoned academic and experienced gallery director, I am in as credible a position to conduct this project as an art historian per se. Finally, the confidence of the hosting institutions should remove any remaining doubts as to my ability to conduct such a project with the requisite artistic, technical and intellectual skills.

References:

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Ronald DeWitt Mills, proposal for COSTA RICA

Lecture: Fine Art Lithography / Research: Costa Rican Contemporary Art

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