Understanding of fertility and creation are often rooted in spiritual traditions. Latin America is home to thousands of indigenous groups, in addition to the mixed populations that came about after European colonization and the forced relocation of African slaves. Latin American works in the AMAM collection incorporate diverse styles, religious imagery, and popular knowledge. The following works provide insight into various notions of fertility and creation throughout the region.

José Clemente Orozco (Mexican), *La Bandera (The Flag)*, 1928

In the above lithograph, a pregnant woman watches as two men solemnly retreat carrying the Mexican flag. Orozco, along with Diego Rivera and David Alfaro Siqueiros, were deemed los tres grandes ("the three giants") and known for politically charged works created during and after the Mexican Revolution. *La Bandera* prompts a discussion of the various roles of women during the revolution—they served as soldaderas who fought alongside men in combat, as well as nurses who tended to the wounded. This image relates the family, personified by the pregnant woman, to the nationalist cause of the Mexican Revolution. The promise of a renewed national identity mirrored the hope that the unborn child could potentially grow to be a future revolutionary. The work also sheds light on a darker side of family dynamics during this period: the juxtaposition of the women and the retreating men conveys the separation and hardship suffered by families.

José Bedia (Cuban), *Con Licencia*, 1991

José Bedia’s initiation into the Afro-Cuban Palo de Monte religion informs much of his work, and the influence of this faith is evident in *Con Licencia*. Below, Bedia depicts a figure kneeling in reverence to the creator-god Nsambia-mungo as he asks permission to cut down a plant. Another plant has already been severed, and both are clearly the "hands", or appendages, of the personified Earth reaching up through the ground. This vast work considers the relationship between humans and the natural environment, while giving prominence to both. The diagonal line of words connecting the creator-god to the human devotee suggests the respectful consent necessary for a life in harmony with the earth.

Liliana Porter (Argentine), *Brancusi*, 2008

Although this photograph references the works of sculptor Constantin Brancusi, its focus on the egg, a universally recognized symbol of fertility, invites the viewer to consider the image in another light. Liliana Porter’s photograph—within-a-photograph distances the viewer from the egg’s usual context, placing it into a much more sterile scene. The stone toy bird that peeks at the photograph of an egg adds an element of humor, in part because the egg appears much too large in comparison to the bird beside it.

*AMAM SELF GUIDE: FERTILITY / DECAY*

Written by Sara Morgan (OC ’14) and Victoria Velasco (OC ’15)
To accompany the exhibition *Latin American and Latino Art at the Allen*
AMAM SELF GUIDE: FERTILITY / DECAY

Many works in the exhibition express grim themes of personal, cultural, and spiritual decay or destruction. Although some may be visually or emotionally disturbing at first, taking time to look more deeply can help you to gain a deeper understanding and appreciation for the life experiences of the artists who created them.

**Rimer Cardillo (Uruguayan), Untitled, from the series Vanishing Tapestries, 1994**

Using the natural world as his medium, Rimer Cardillo created a tapestry using photographs of animal specimens found during the excavation of the Quebrada de los Cuervos Gorge. During the 1970s and 80s, the Uruguayan military dictatorship wreaked ecological havoc in this gorge, as well as committed horrendous crimes against the nation’s civilian population. This tapestry testifies to the physical and spiritual scars left by the military regime in Uruguay.

**Alfredo Jaar (Chilean), Church, Camp, and Couple from the project Real Pictures, 1994–95**

How does one approach a subject like genocide through the making of art? In a project titled Real Pictures, Alfredo Jaar grappled with the immensity of genocide in Rwanda, which he had visited in 1994. In the below work, Jaar has placed a photograph in a black archival box with a descriptive label on its top. Rather than allowing the viewer to see the image inside, he forces the viewer to actively engage with the work, to read and absorb information about the tragic aftermath of the genocide.

**Fernando de Szyszlo (Peruvian), The Execution of Túpac Amaru, 1966**

The above painting references the 1572 execution of Túpac Amaru, the last indigenous monarch of the Inca Empire. His death at the hands of Spanish colonial invaders was a terrible blow to the cultural psyche of the Peruvian people, who believed their monarch was a god. Fernando de Szyszlo’s painting of this event may be abstract in terms of representation, but the violence of Amaru’s death is evident in the jarring color palette and the sharp cleft through the center of the composition. Szyszlo chose to paint the scene during the bloody political upheaval of Peru in the 1960s, creating a historical parallel with the unstable period that followed the death of Amaru.
Pre-Columbian art encompasses the millennia of cultural production that took place in North America, Central America, South America, and the isles of the Caribbean prior to European colonization in the 16th century, which began with the 1492 landing (in the Bahamas) of Christopher Columbus—hence the term “Pre-Columbian”. Ceramic works from the AMAM collection, which provide just a few examples of the richness and technical skill of these cultures, are located in the East Gallery, in the case left of the fireplace.

Seated Figure of a Woman with a Pot (left), Mexican (Jalisco), ca. 300–600
Projecting a powerful presence, this large, hollow sculpture is typical of ceramic work from the western Mexican state of Jalisco. Its light-colored slip, long face, rounded torso and arms, and vacant eyes express the region’s traditional figural style. Figures such as this, depicting people of all social and political backgrounds, were found buried in shaft tombs—a practice unknown elsewhere in Mexico. The labor involved in creating these tombs, as well as the quality of goods found in them, suggest their creation and use was reserved for society’s elite.

Tripod Polychrome Plate Decorated with Stepped-Key Frieze, Bird, and Jaguars Mexican (Mayan, Campeche coast), ca. 600–900
This plate was discovered in the Mexican state of Campeche, near the western edge of the Yucatán Peninsula. Sophisticated pottery workshops have been identified throughout the region. While painted pottery could have been used for food service or as gifts or social currency, this plate was probably used in funerary rites and placed directly into a burial site or tomb. Its imagery is strongly linked to symbols of death, especially the mythical Muan bird in the center, which was thought to be the messenger of the gods of the underworld.

Vessel with Warrior-shaped Finial, Peruvian (Moche), ca. 500–700
Moche vessels are often identified by the unique “stirrup” spouts opening into the vessel, as seen in this work and another in this case. A prominent figure is molded into the top half of the vessel. The figure’s facial features and headdress, as well as the animal figures looking over the headdress, suggest a deity of some kind. The figure holds a knife in one hand and a decapitated head in the other, an action strongly associated with supernatural beings in Moche art.
Several works in the Ellen Johnson Gallery focus on the indigenous peoples that inhabited the Americas prior to the arrival of European settlers. While indigenous people are still present throughout Latin America, they are often portrayed in mainstream histories as existing only in romanticized cultures of the past. In the works here, artists drew on indigenous art mediums, motifs, and themes in homage to peoples that often go unrecognized.

Diego Rivera (Mexican), Portrait of a Girl, 1945

After the Mexican Revolution ended in 1920, Mexican artists made the political and cultural values of the revolution evident in their artwork. Reflecting the growing interest in indigenous blood among Mexico’s mestizo (mixed race) populations during this time, Diego Rivera’s works often include subject matter that recalls the traditions and culture of indigenous groups that continue to exist in Mexico. Rivera integrated the color schemes found in Aztec art and borrowed the storytelling techniques found on Mayan steles throughout his career as an artist. In this work, a small girl with warm, brown skin and large eyes looks directly at the viewer. She stands in an empty indoor space so as to call attention to her bold stance and the colorful headdress and dress, typical of indigenous groups in Mexico.

Alfredo Jaar (Chilean), Terra Non Descoperta (Undiscovered Land), 1990

In this photograph supported by a light box, Alfredo Jaar calls attention to the vestiges of colonialism that continue to perpetuate huge disparities of wealth in Latin America. A diary excerpt from Columbus’s first voyage to the Americas, which is superimposed onto a photograph of a struggling miner, connects current problems in Brazil—and in Latin America more broadly—to the genocide and abuse of local natural resources that occurred centuries ago. Jaar calls attention to the mining industry’s exploitation of workers and threat to the health and livelihood of indigenous peoples who inhabit rural areas where mining often takes place.

Carlos Mérida (Guatemalan, active in Mexico), Untitled, 1934

Born in Guatemala, Carlos Mérida spent most of his life in Mexico. His works fuse artistic elements from indigenous art—especially that of his Mayan ancestry—with organic forms present in various styles of European non-figurative art. The geometric shapes prominent in indigenous artwork, alongside the abstraction emerging in 20th-century Western art, became a jumping off point for Mérida to explore his interest in creating Surrealist art. In another series of works not presented here, Mérida depicts the styles of dress of various indigenous groups of Guatemala to pay homage to the cultural heritage that has informed his artistic style.
Works in the exhibition by artists of Latin American descent living in the United States highlight several important cultural issues. Whether criticizing the U.S. government, alluding to various subcultures, or challenging Catholic stigma against homosexuality, these works convey socially and politically charged messages. The very word used to describe this group also brings up issues of gender: Latino, the traditional term, has in some instances been modified to Latin@ to account for both male and female individuals. More recently, some people have begun to use the term Latinx, a non-binary word, to include those who self-identify as neither masculine nor feminine.

**Rupert García (American), The First of May (above), 2004**
Rupert García became interested in political issues in the late 1960s, after serving in the U.S. Army during the Vietnam War. As a young art student at San Francisco State University, he embraced printmaking as a tool for social change and began to create silkscreen posters that were accessible to a wider base of viewers. Later in his career, García worked with Magnolia Editions to produce The First of May, which poses the question of U.S. accountability during the Iraq War. The obscured figure in this work not only calls to mind the unnamed Iraqi prisoner tortured at Abu Ghraib, but also conjures images of the Ku Klux Klan, thus reminding the viewer of several troubling periods in U.S. history.

**Luis Jiménez (American), Vaquero (above right), 1981**
This lithograph depicts a vaquero, or cowboy, riding a wild, bucking horse. Jiménez’s artistic style is influenced by a number of artists, including José Clemente Orozco and Diego Rivera. As a youth, Jiménez worked in his father’s shop creating neon signs. He was also involved in lowrider culture, a community of primarily young Mexican-American men that centers on the artistic adornment of vintage cars. The aesthetics of lowrider culture are present in Vaquero—the glitter recalls the paint finish commonly seen on lowrider cars, while the robust, muscular body of the horse evokes the enviable chiseled figure of lowrider cars.

**Andres Serrano (American), Untitled VII (Ejaculate in Trajectory), 1989**
In the controversial Piss Christ (1987), Andres Serrano photographed a crucifix submerged in his own urine. Copies of the photograph have been vandalized by outraged religious fundamentalists. The stream of semen in the above image, however, is not recognizably vulgar. By using bodily fluids in his art, the artist challenges societal stigmas about the body and the sacred.
THE ALLEN MEMORIAL ART MUSEUM GRATEFULLY ACKNOWLEDGES PROGRAM SUPPORT FROM THE OHIO HUMANITIES COUNCIL.
These works in the Ellen Johnson Gallery will capture the imagination of visitors of all ages, and are appropriate for kids age 10 and under.

Margarita Cabrera (Mexican), *Bicicleta azul platino (Platinum Blue Bicycle)*, 2006
Do you think you’d be able to get anywhere if you tried riding this bike? The artist who made this soft sculpture wanted people to think about how getting around is difficult for some people, especially migrants. A *migrant* is someone who moves away from his or her home to live for a long time, maybe forever, in another country. The journey can be very difficult, just as taking a ride on a soft bicycle would be almost impossible! One more thing: notice how the artist has left some loose threads exposed—not the neatest sewing job. This wasn’t a mistake, though. By doing this, she calls attention to the hard work that many Mexican immigrants—in addition to peoples from many other countries—do behind the scenes so that we can buy bicycles and other things in stores.

Pepón Osorio (American, born in Puerto Rico), *Tina’s House*, from the series *Home Visits*, 2000
*Tina’s House* is no ordinary dollhouse, as you can probably tell. In fact, it recreates in miniature a home that caught on fire. The smiling woman in the photograph on the side of the house is Tina, who escaped from the fire with her two daughters. Little dolls in the yard represent Tina and her daughters safely out of harm’s way. Before *Tina’s House* was given to the museum, it traveled around the country, staying in the homes of different families for a few weeks at a time. This was similar to the Puerto Rican practice of the visiting saint, in which religious icons were loaned out to families for private devotion. Isn’t it nice that the artist shared his work like that? Would you like to have artwork come visit your home?

Luis Cruz Azaceta (Cuban), *The Journey*, 1988
This colorful painting shows a person sitting alone in a one-man boat. The waves underneath the boat were created with thick, dark paint strokes, making the water look pretty scary! The artist left his home country of Cuba to live in the United States when he was seventeen years old, as did many other children from Cuba. These children often traveled without their parents and had to struggle to survive on their sea journeys. Now that you know that this painting is about the artist’s journey across the ocean, how does it make you feel? Have you ever imagined what it must be like for a young child to travel all alone to a new country?
Edouard Duval-Carrié (Haitian), *Justicia*, 1998

This painting was created by an artist from the country of Haiti. The woman in this painting represents a savior for the African slaves in Haiti that rebelled against French rulers. She stands out in the very dark setting due to her colorful wings and the flaming sword she holds. Even the soldier in the bottom left corner of the painting has been knocked off his feet by her powerful presence. The red, white, and blue banner that hangs above her head represents the Haitian flag. What do you notice about the frame of this painting that makes it different from others in the exhibition?


The print shown at the top center of the page depicts a *vaquero*, or cowboy, riding a wild, bucking horse. You might be wondering, “Hey, is that glitter?!” It sure is! That’s because the artist, whose name is Luis Jiménez, is influenced by two fun art forms: comic books and lowrider cars. Even though it’s a still image, you can tell that there is movement due to the thin lines of color coming off the horse, like in a comic book. The artist is also a big fan of lowrider cars, which are cars that ride really low near the ground and are often decorated with care by their owners to be shown in car shows, or just to look good when cruising the neighborhood!

Vik Muniz (Brazilian), *Untitled (Medusa Plate)*, 1999

Luckily for us, Brazilian artist Vik Muniz never learned that he’s not supposed to play with his food! Muniz used pasta marinara as his artistic medium to create a likeness of the mythological Greek monster, Medusa. According to legend, Medusa has live snakes sprouting from her head and can turn people to stone just by looking at them. Careful, if you look too closely at the Medusa plate you might turn into a bowl of stone-cold pasta!

Roberto Antonio Sebastián Matta Echaurren (Chilean), *Wild West*, 1962

Matta created this childlike series of crayon drawings when he was fifty-one years old! It seems the artist was a kid at heart, and these images of cowboys are certainly delightful. The cowboys in the drawing are involved in some sort of shootout—one of them is even holding two guns! Next to this series are some of Matta’s more abstract works. Which do you prefer: the whimsical *Wild West* drawings or the mysterious complexity of his other works?
Prepared by Sara Morgan (OC ‘14) and Victoria Velasco (OC ‘15)
To accompany the exhibition Latin American and Latino Art at the Allen

This map of Latin America shows the countries of origin for some of the artists whose work is represented in the exhibition. See the back of this sheet for names of the artists.
Works by the artists listed below (except number 8) may be found in the Ellen Johnson Gallery at the south side of the museum building.

1. MARGARITA CABRERA (American, born in Mexico), *Platinum Blue Bicycle*, 2006
2. ADOLFO PATIÑO TORRES (Mexican), *Triángulo místico*, 1954
3. QUISQUEYA HENRÍQUEZ (Cuban), *Two Skins*, 1995
4. CONSUELO CASTAÑEDA (Cuban), *Untitled*, from the series *Speed-Split*, 1998
5. EDOUARD DUVAL-CARRIÉ (Haitian), *Justicia*, 1998
7. CARLOS MÉRIDA (Guatemalan), *Untitled*, 1934
8. DIQUÍS CULTURE (Costa Rica), *Rana Effigy Jar*, ca. 11th to mid-16th century
   Located in the East Gallery
9. DORIS SALCEDO (Colombian), *Untitled*, 1989-93
10. VIK MUNIZ (Brazilian), *Untitled (Medusa Plate)*, 1999
11. ALFREDO JAAR (Chilean), *Untitled*, from the portfolio *In a Dream You Saw a Way to Survive and You Were Full of Joy*, 1990
12. RIMER CARDILLO (Uruguayan), *Silent Barrack*, 1989
13. LILIANA PORTER (Argentine), *Brancusi*, 2008