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The Manuel Solari Swayne Library of the Museum of Art of Lima: Between self-management, patronage and international cooperation

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Background

The Manuel Solari Swayne Library and the Peruvian Art Archives constitute the documentation section of the Museum of Art of Lima (MAL), the only information service specialized in the visual arts in Peru. The Library, established in 1986, takes its name from Manuel Solari Swayne, who was a notable defender of the Peruvian cultural heritage.

The Museum of Art of Lima holds the only panoramic collection of Peruvian art now in existence in Peru. The collection, containing more than ten thousand duly classified art objects, offers a comprehensive view of Peruvian art, from pre-Columbian times to the present day. Furthermore, the Museum enjoys a strategic location in the City of Lima. Thanks to an agreement with the Municipality of Lima, it has its headquarters in the building previously called Palacio de la Exposición, built at the end of the 19th century and declared part of the national heritage. Located at the entrance to the historical center of the City of Lima, at one end of Gran Parque de Lima, the building was easily converted into a museum, since it was initially the site of the first great public exhibition organized in Peru in 1872.

The Museum of Art of Lima is governed by the Patronato de las Artes, a non-profit private group of Peruvian entrepreneurs and intellectuals who, in 1954, initiated a project that led to the official opening of the Museum of Art of Lima in 1961.

The MAL is a leading institution among Peruvian museums, lively, active and at the service of the community. Through its temporary exhibitions and its relations with the principal embassies in Peru, it has created links with the international art world. Its ties with the academic community have made possible the development of an ambitious program which documents Peruvian art history by means of exhibitions and publications. Needless to say, the Museum of Art of Lima does not perceive a museum as a mere guardian of cultural heritage; it proposes that works of art acquire their meaning only when they are given life through projects of dissemination, exhibitions, courses and conferences.

The influential position of the Museum of Art of Lima derives from leadership with a vision for the future, as well as the collaboration of the private sector. Since 1995, the chief curatorship of the Museum, and currently also the direction, are in the hands of professional art researchers who work with a highly skilled staff. Furthermore, solid support of the private sector has given the Museum, from the very beginning, the means to initiate projects and to enrich its collections, as we will see in more detail in the case of the Manuel Solari Swayne Library

In the year 2000, the directors of the Museum of Art of Lima adopted a comprehensive project devoted to the museum's renewal, which was initiated in 2003. Among the objectives are fundamental goals, such as the conservation of heritage, educational and professional training programs, the promotion of tourism and the advancement of scientific research.

The Museum of Art of Lima's main priorities are to conduct scientific research on its collection, present it to its visitors with a view towards furthering their knowledge, and preserve it for future generations.

The MAL is committed to the growth and future expansion of its Library and Archives. This is reflected in the prominent place given to the Manuel Solari Swayne (MSS) Library in the general renovation plan and the re-allocation of space. The plan calls for doubling the space currently occupied by the Library, an essential step which will facilitate better access to the collections and promote the development of studies specialized in art, a field long neglected.

As an academic discipline, art history has had an uneven development in Latin America. Very few countries, with the exception of Argentina and Mexico, can offer postgraduate studies in this field. At the same time, it is essential to foster these studies in order to respond to the increasing demands of a variety of users, researchers and students, who are currently working without documentation centres or easy access to bibliographic resources. In conclusion, although some visible progress has been made, there is still no specialized library to facilitate studies in museology, art history and the history of architecture.

The collections of the Manuel Solari Swayne Library

The collections of the Manuel Solari Swayne Library are comprised of carefully selected publications on art history, museology and the visual arts in Peru and Latin America, as well as on history, linguistics and literature. The collections contain approximately 6,500 items: 6,000 books and large format catalogues, 500 pamphlets and 526 serial titles (3,780 volumes), of which 90 are current subscriptions. The Library currently occupies a space of 457 square meters (4,919 square feet) on the first floor of the Museum of Art of Lima.

Documents and materials on Peruvian art and cultural traditions, from pre-Columbian to contemporary art, represent 45% of the Library's collection. Works on Latin America constitute 27% of the collection, those related to Spanish art and art history represent 20%, and 8% are theoretical works and general works on art history. A total of 58% of the works are in the Spanish language, and the remaining 42% are in English, French and other languages.

The Peruvian Art Archives were created in 1995 as an alternative collection of artists' files, dedicated to the systematic conservation of primary sources, manuscripts, photographs and printed material of all types, and of "gray literature" generated by the artists and institutions currently involved in artistic activities in Peru. Since very few studies have been published on contemporary Peruvian art, these materials constitute indispensable resources. The Manuel Solari Swayne Library is also a repository of the official files and projects related to the Museum of Art of Lima.

The Manuel Solari Swayne Library's visual resources collection consists of a valuable group of over 5,000 photographs by Dr. Francisco Stastny, representing works of art restored or exhibited in the Museum of Art of Lima in the 1960s, and more than 500 views of Peruvian monuments and works of art from the collection of Manuel González Salazar, an active photographer in the 1940s and 1950s. A collection of over 2,000 postcards of buildings, monuments and archeological sites of Peru and Latin America constitutes valuable documentary testimony of many destroyed or altered historical sites.

The special collections section of the Museum of Art of Lima houses documentary and visual collections of artists such as Carlos Baca-Flor, Juan O. Leppiani, Reynaldo Luza, and Mariano Soyer, as well as two institutional files: one from Luis Felipe Tello, an active collector and gallery owner in the 1950s and 1960s, and the other from Fotogalería Secuencia (1977-1981), the first gallery devoted to photography in Peru.

Collection development

The Museum of Art of Lima has been able to enrich its collection through donations and exchanges with researchers, educators, publishing houses and major institutions, and further strengthen it with selective acquisitions of out of print or rare titles related to art history and culture in Peru. There has been limited opportunity to acquire art books of a general nature, such as theory and art criticism, or reference books, most of which are published commercially. In regards to periodicals, private and

institutional donations enable us to maintain a limited but representative and up-to-date collection.

We have said that the Manuel Solari Swayne Library not only promotes research and the educational role of the museum but also tries to serve a much larger public. In this regard, the growth of the Library is seriously limited by the lack of funding. Because our exchange program is still insufficient, the Library is seeking to encourage patronage and international collaboration.

Patronage, which dates back to Antiquity, is actually the principal means of financing culture in Anglo-Saxon countries, especially in the United States. In those countries, supporting the arts is viewed as a duty by higher income citizens and thus the responsibility of financing art projects is redirected towards the community.

In Peru's republican history, we define patronage within the framework of cultural policies, which reflect a searching for our cultural identity. This approach is expressed almost in its entirety in the role that the state must have with regards to culture and cultural policies.

State cultural policies have been erratic in Peru, as shown by the almost total lack of general guidelines. Throughout Peruvian history, some governments have been favorable to the promotion of cultural heritage, especially in regards to pre-Hispanic and colonial monuments, and have encouraged some types of cultural creation; others have favored, to a lesser extent, popular access to culture. But, contrary to Spain and Argentina, Peru has not introduced new legislation to protect the national heritage and to encourage Peruvians to know and appreciate their culture. Because of this, a group of entrepreneurs, called the Patronato de las Artes del MAL, took over the role which, in English-speaking countries, is assumed by institutions such as the Arts Council. The group's objective is to promote and finance certain artistic domains, such as the visual arts and cultural heritage. We should point out that Peruvian laws regarding tax exemption for patronage are seldom clear, and when they are, as in the case of the recently approved Law of the Book (*Ley del Libro*), there is a lack of legal means to apply them.

A number of companies, banks, universities and people have collaborated with the Museum of Art of Lima in its different exhibitions and projects, and have made donations to the Manuel Solari Swayne Library. In addition, the Library's collections are enhanced by the information, catalogues and materials sent by the local art galleries, and by exceptional private donations.

We want to emphasize the case of the Fundación Telefónica, which we consider especially relevant. This international company, which operates in some Latin American countries and in Spain, has played a leading role in the field of patronage in Peru. Alone or with others, it has supported projects that have made it possible, among other things, to identify and encourage new artists through a bi-annual award, to promote some important exhibitions in the Museum of Art of Lima, and to bring technical and financial help in the promotion of its cultural programs through the Web page *Peru Virtual*, which gives access to the MSS Library's catalogue. Also, because of its international scope, the Fundación

Telefónica has been able to donate books, catalogues and printed material obtained from its various headquarters in Latin America and Spain.

To conclude, in order to reach the degree of improvement advocated in the Museum's renewal proposal, the MSS Library had to go beyond its present exchange and patronage program, and adopt a policy of additional acquisitions. Special financing was obtained through a grant from the Getty Foundation of Los Angeles, and the MSS Library now seeks to collect materials that will expand its perspective and foster comparative art studies. The purpose is to convert the Library into a resource center to support the collection development and exhibitions of the Museum of Art of Lima; serve the academic and artistic communities in Peru; and also exploit the Library's potential as a resource for researchers interested in the artistic traditions of the Andean Region.

To summarize, the Manuel Solari Swayne Library has been able to greatly enhance its collections through the Museum of Art of Lima's renewal project, which makes research an essential element of the museum's development. This process had already been initiated before, thanks to a favorable conjunction of a leadership with a vision and the constant cooperation of the private sector.

But we have other tasks ahead of us. Besides creating a strong art library network in Peru, we have to continue to develop the collections of the Manuel Solari Swayne Library, make them more accessible to the public and create a dynamic dissemination program.