

Librería
Bonilla y Asociados
desde 1950



Título: Twentieth-Century Art Of Latin America

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Precio: \$720.00

Editorial:

Año: 2001

Tema:

Edición: 1ª

Sinopsis

ISBN: 9780292708587

The twentieth-century art of Latin America is art in the western tradition, and its leading figures--Wifredo Lam, Roberto Matta, Diego Rivera, Joaquín Torres-García, to name only a few--have achieved international stature. Yet much of the writing about this art has offered either a victimized view of an art tradition dominated by foreign models or a romanticized view of what Latin American art should be. This pathfinding book, by contrast, seeks not to "invent" Latin American art but to look at it from the points of view of its own artists and critics.

Drawing on some forty years of studying and teaching Latin American art, Jacqueline Barnitz surveys the major currents and artists of the twentieth century in Mexico, the Caribbean, and South America (including Brazil). She progresses chronologically from modernismo and the break with nineteenth-century academic art to some of the trends of the 1980s, setting each movement within its historical and cultural contexts. This grand survey of modern Latin American art will thus be the essential guide to a vibrant art tradition, as well as a vital teaching tool. Lavishly illustrated with color and black-and-white reproductions of major works, it will be useful to artists, collectors, historians, writers, and social scientists, as well as art historians.