

SOCIETY AND THE ARTS

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ESTUDIOS SOCIOLOGICOS SOBRE SOCIOLOGÍA DEL ARTE. By SOCIEDAD MEXICANA DE GEOGRAFÍA Y ESTADÍSTICA. (México: Asociación Mexicana de Sociología, Correspondiente de la Asociación Internacional de Sociología de la U.N.E.S.C.O., 1968. 2 vols.)

Sociology of the arts consists of the function, structure, role, institution and interrelationship of art within society. More simply stated, it deals with two basic questions: What is the influence of art and artists on society, and what is the influence of society on art and the artists? Those working within the field of sociology of the arts come down squarely in the controversy within art history and art criticism of whether content or form is more significant. Predictably, sociologists tend to support content, and this commitment to content evaluation is often found in the following approaches to the study of music, literature, and art. Given the nature of sociology, the focus is often centered on seeing the artist as a social being influenced and shaped by society. Historians and critics tend to discuss the art and the artist and the type of criticism relevant to a collection of works.

From 22 to 26 April 1968, the National Congress of Sociology held a conference in Mexico which presented a fairly good picture of where research in the sociology of the arts stood at that time. More than ten years later, it is not clear that the field has progressed much beyond the level of inquiry at that conference. Indeed, many of the questions raised and lines of research suggested then have not been followed up. Two-thirds of the papers presented at the conference were published in the two-volume work reviewed here.

For the conference, art was defined in the broadest sense to include painting, sculpture, architecture, music, literature, and cinema. The publication includes nothing directly on dance, although the conference did, and nothing on photography, which has emerged as an area of increasing significance within the last ten years. Several articles do make reference to photography changing the role of the arts, as, for example, Marie Cecile Riffault in her study of nineteenth-century easel painting.

The two volumes are divided into ten sections that deal with general theory of art; painting, sculpture, and architecture; music; litera-

ture; religion and art; cinema; the art critic; censorship; art and law; and "free themes in art," which includes eleven papers that did not fit into the other categories and dealt with such varied subjects as tragedy and art, publicity and art, art and mass communication, and art and tourism.

When first examining the table of contents, one is struck with the interesting and relevant topics. With reading, however, both the organization of the volumes and the structure of the articles present certain problems. First, as in most conferences, the quality of the papers varies greatly. It is not clear on what basis the papers were chosen. One suspects that all formal papers sent to the editor were published. Thus one can read the interesting and well-researched article complete with twenty-one illustrations by Alfredo Jaramillo J. on "The Cartoon as an Artistic Expression of Social Reality" and turn to the rather superficial article by Vicente Fernández Bravo on "Mexican Muralism and Its Universal Influence." B. Mantilla Pineda, in "The Sociology of the Indigenous Novel," spends too much time on background and tries to do so much by covering the novels dealing with the Indians of Ecuador, Peru, and Bolivia that he cannot provide the necessary depth of analysis. On the other hand, Genaro María González in "Religion and Art" also covers a great deal in examining how religious liturgy and music was influenced by Nahuatl speakers, but he takes seventy-four pages and thus can deal in general and specific terms.

Second, because this is a collection of papers, there is no consistency of style and organization. While most likely the work will be used for reference rather than by individuals reading the complete volumes, one finds it repetitive to read in essay after essay the definition of art and sociology. The failure to draw any conclusions from the conference through either an introduction or a conclusion tends, like the overlap in papers, to emphasize disunity rather than common agreements. Further, while the organization of the volumes seems rational, the papers themselves do not always adhere to that organization. Many of the writers begin their papers with theoretical discussions of the sociology of the arts which overlap the theory section and are often better. For example, Justino Fernández in his discussion of "The Critic of Art and His Social Function" needs to discuss what art is in order to discuss the function of the critic. Possibly the whole section on the critic and art should have followed the section on theory. Although some individuals in their papers successfully integrate content and theory, the section on theory fails to integrate the two volumes. A further problem of organization of the volumes is the absence of a section on the philosophy of art, evidently because the conference did not include such a session. Articles by Roberto Luis Prado, A. L. Machado Neto, and Griselda Alvarez, whose papers are all included in the last catchall section, clearly explore the philosophy of art.

Since many of the papers were only developed for oral presentation, they generally lack the bibliographical and documentary sources that would allow the reader to follow up interesting points. Articles are flawed by the fact that some authors had greater vision than time, energy, or space to accomplish what they desired to do. For example, Roberto Fabregat Cúneo tries to cover a couple of thousand years of history of the theater in twelve pages, which may succeed as a speech but is far from satisfactory in a volume that will primarily be used by specialists. When the subject attempted is too broad, the result is a superficial discussion. Nevertheless, some individuals do accomplish and prove their theses in limited time and space, and their work is outstanding. While Luis Sandi, "Music and Society: Origin and Evolution of Musical Art," is fairly successful in his broad approach, the studies most needed are those which deal in specific detail, such as Alphons Silbermann's "The Musical Excursion of Max Weber" or Michele Mack's "Reflections on Architecture as a Sociological Document." Although these volumes were produced in the same year in which the conference was held, which allowed for the quick dissemination of the latest research in the field, an argument can certainly be made that the sociology of the arts would have been better served by producing a work that eliminated the weakest essays, systematized the format, and increased the bibliographical and documenting evidence.

The volumes raise the fourth question of usage. Some of the papers appear to present little new material and thus are of limited value to the experts, while they may be of value as a summary on the state of the field. Other papers clearly represent new and exciting work. Further, in addition to the question of expert or nonexpert utilization, is the question of who will find the volume most useful—sociologists or Latin Americanists. The collection does indeed include about twelve articles that will appeal to Latin Americanists in various fields—Lidia Bianchi and Luisa Mastrangelo's "Advertisement and Art" will be of interest to those studying social change; Sofía Acosta is the only one who uses the traditional sociological questionnaire to learn how thirty-seven families in Paraná, Argentina, view poetry; and political scientists will enjoy Alfredo Jaramillo's article on the political cartoon of Ecuador. However, the majority of the articles touch only lightly on Latin America or not at all. These articles will appeal rather to individuals within a discipline and those concerned with overall European civilization. For example, Norberto Rodríguez Bustamante's "Social Control, Censorship and Cinema" examines how censorship has been applied through the ages and finally ends with three pages on cinematographic censorship in Argentina. This is not to say that many of the articles dealing with the sociology of the arts or one of the various themes from music to law are not of interest to the Latin Americanist, but one must pick and choose.

The advantage of such breadth might be to increase usefulness, but in practical terms, what too often happens is that such volumes as *Estudios Sociológicos* will be utilized primarily by sociologists living in Latin America.

The most significant aspect of the conference may be that a meeting was held in Mexico on the sociology of the arts, and Latin Americans along with Europeans and North Americans had the opportunity to participate in and discuss a subject that is yet fairly new and to add their particular perspective to the field. Two areas of the conference represented a major Latin American contribution. The first was the existence of a session on art and law in which the evolution of legal protection of the arts was presented in several papers. The most interesting was by Carlos Ferdinand Cuadros Villena, who noted that art can be an expression of law as, for example, in the murals of Diego Rivera in Casa de Gobierno of Mexico or David Alfaro Siqueiros in Palacio de Chapultepec. The second was the government support of the application of the integration and promotion of the arts. Manlio F. Tapia Camacho discussed the efforts of the municipality of Veracruz to encourage arts in various forms and described the practical results from 1964 to 1967.

Several articles develop the sociologist's view of art. This approach is used in Carlos Vargas's "The Sociology of Contemporary Mexican Mural Art." The work of Diego Rivera, José Clemente Orozco, and David Alfaro Siqueiros is influenced by society, particularly the Mexican Revolution. At the same time Vargas recognizes the artists' influence in shaping attitudes and ideals of what the Mexican Revolution was. Michele Mack, in "Reflections on Architecture Considered as a Source for Sociological Documentation," goes a step farther than Vargas, noting that architecture more than any other of the arts—painting, sculpture, music—must be rooted in reality. In effect it is impossible for an architect to realize his project without relating to the aspects of the civilization of which he is a part. In "The Cartoon as an Artistic Expression of Social Reality," Alfredo Jaramillo examines society by another form. He states that the artist becomes the social critic of society and adapts to his environment to the degree that he can understand it and thus criticizes and modifies the cultural and social structure. Emile Sicard in his analysis of Balkan and Russian literature develops in detail how one chooses the best sociological novels and the type of analysis that is utilized.

Although there are a number of excellent articles that focus on specific studies applying sociological analysis to a particular type of documentation, most devote considerable effort to the development of theory. Arnold W. Foster sees the artists' values and orientations shaped by society even to the type of style they choose; Felipe Pardinas argues for the application of more stringent and consistent scientific meth-

odology in the examination of works of art; and Justino Fernández, in examining "The Critic of Art and his Social Function," defines the form of analysis that the critic should follow.

Estudios sociológicos sobre sociología del arte, which brings together a wide variety of studies of the field and clearly illustrates the strengths and weaknesses of the discipline, also points the direction for new research. What is needed now is the application of the theoretical methodology to particular documentary forms; the sociologist must go beyond discussing literature or music or painting or even murals as a sociological document to the examination of individual novels, significant musical compositions, and specific murals as sociological and historical sources. To do this effectively the sociologist will have to immerse himself in a study of a particular art within a given society.