and agitation – by dispatching her corpse first to Milan, then on to Madrid. Finally repatriated in 1975, Evita and her symbolism have, according to Hedges, been most particularly resurrected by the administrations of Néstor Kirchner (2003–7) and his successor and wife Cristina (2007–15).

*Evita* is an engaging and accessible read that is delightful in its evocation of mid-century Argentina. Neither blinding the reader with complex equations of power nor boring with long trawls through institutional fragility, this exploration of populism locates the study of enduring, iconic leadership in the details of personality and cultural circumstance.

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At the height of the rampant inflation that plagued the Brazilian economy during the first half of the 1970s, at a time when the price of beans was increasing 400 per cent in one year, the artist Cildo Meireles produced a series of ersatz bank notes with a value of zero cruzeiros. Using the same design and printing methods as the Casa da Moeda and replacing the signature of the president of the Banco Central do Brasil with Meireles’s own, the notes were sold on the streets of Rio de Janeiro using the slogan ‘Veja a que ponto chegamos: zero cruzeiro’ (Just look how far we’ve come: zero cruzeiro). For a brief period before the street vendors stopped selling them, fearing reprisals from the military government in power at the time, the artist’s bank notes infiltrated the currency system, exposing the instability of state economic institutions as well as the unreliability of money as a marker of value. In an economic context in which, between 1968 and 1971, the cruzeiro was devalued 24 times, Brazilian citizens would be forgiven for questioning which value system was real and which was false.

*Art Systems* is a study of conceptual art during the 1970s in Brazil, a period dominated by a military government which was at its most repressive until 1974, under the leadership of the hard-line General Emílio Garrastazu Médici, before entering a period of gradual *diṣtenção* or relaxation of authoritarian rule, moving towards the first democratic elections in 1985. Understandably perhaps, this a moment in which cultural production has most frequently been considered to be a reflection of the political system and, in particular, as a response to the censorship in place following the repressive *Ato Institutional No. Cinco* (Institutional Act No. 5), which was issued in 1968, propelling many musicians, writers and artists into exile. Based on extensive interviews with artists and critics and combining analysis of individual art works with cultural history, Elena Shtromberg’s study aims to provide a broader view by examining the connection between art and politics during this period in all its complexity and multiplicity.

Rather than as responses to political repression, *Art Systems* interprets conceptual art works during this period as interventions or ‘infiltrations’ into four main ‘systems’ of communication, exchange and representation: currency, newspapers, television and maps. Shtromberg uses the perspective of Ludwig von Bertalanffy’s general systems theory to view artworks in relation to the ‘network of relationships’ (p. 3) they both produce and are conditioned by, a critical approach that was influential in the art worlds of the 1960s and 1970s and that lends itself particularly well to the Brazilian
context, in which the artwork was undergoing a transition from its status as an object to be viewed to ‘a set of experiences shaped by everyday social systems’ (p. 5).

The book is divided into four chapters in line with the systems that are the object of study. The first section provides an analysis of artworks using bank notes against the backdrop of the social system of currency in Brazil at the time. Meireles’s Zero Cruzeiro (1974–8) project extends the critical gesture of his earlier series of 1970 Insertções em circuitos ideológicos (Insertions into ideological circuits) in which the artist inserted political slogans onto the labels of Coca-Cola bottles (‘Yankees go home!’) and dollar bills (‘Eleições diretas’, a demand for democratic elections). The idea, Meireles explains, was to ‘take advantage of a pre-existing system of circulation’ as a vehicle for ‘a kind of mobile graffiti’. As well as a response to the economic and political situation in Brazil at the time, Meireles’s work with currency (as well as that of Paulo Miranda, who also used bank notes as material support for this artwork) clearly demonstrated the influence of Claude E. Shannon’s information theory as well as Marshall McLuhan’s work on media, which exerted a huge influence across Latin America. Meireles thought that the task of artists was to intervene in and restructure the circulation of information, either by hijacking the vehicles of information produced by the state and market or by creating alternative circuits.

The creation of alternative circuits of information is a theme that dominates the following two sections of Art Systems. Chapter 2 explores artistic responses to the censorship of newspapers during the 1970s, either through the insertion of artworks into the pages of newspapers (such as Paulo Bruscky and Daniel Santiago’s series of counter-intuitive adverts published in the Diário de Pernambuco, Arte classificada, ‘Classified Art’) or through the development of alternative publications (such as Millôr Fernandes’s work in the satirical cartoon magazine O Pasquim). Shtromberg focuses on ‘those artists who not only adapted the newspaper’s aesthetic properties but also used it as a vehicle for transmitting information in alternative ways’ (p. 46).

Chapter 3 examines developments in video art during this period in relation to the role of the TV Globo network in consolidating a national identity in keeping with the military regime’s conservative ideals. Video art such as that by Leticia Parente (whose 1975 work Marca registrada or ‘Trademark’ shows the artist sewing the words ‘Made in Brazil’ into the sole of her own foot) uses video both to construct alternative viewing networks and to expose elements of national life excluded from the sanitised and whitewashed material distributed on television.

The final chapter analyses work by Meireles, Anna Bella Geiger and Sônia Andrade that challenges the role of cartography in the maintenance of military control. During the 1970s, the government initiated a large-scale project to map the Amazon region using aerial photography with a view to identifying national resources and attracting foreign investment. The resulting maps undermined Indigenous claims to the territory and served the interests of global capital by portraying the Amazon as unoccupied and available for exploitation. In this context, art works such as Geiger’s Elementary Maps 3 (1977) propose alternative ways of mapping that resist conscription into dominant nationalist and capitalist modes of representation.

The discussions of the artworks in Art Systems do not always live up to the promise of the framework laid out in the introduction. Despite protestations to the contrary, the analyses remain tethered to the political context of the dictatorship while the restriction to a national framework detracts from the view of art as an ‘open system’. Nevertheless, rich in insightful historical details, Art Systems is an extremely valuable tool for researchers interested not only in the cultural politics of the 1970s
but also in how the discourses and debates of this period constitute the roots of the current crisis and the artistic responses it has elicited.

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**EDWARD KING**


This highly original and thought-provoking work provides a fresh perspective on the decade-long conflict between the United States and Nicaragua’s Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional (FSLN). Héctor Perla argues that Ronald Reagan’s policy of ‘rollback’ in Nicaragua was defeated thanks to the Sandinistas’ mobilisation of a transnational social movement, a movement which strengthened public opposition to intervention within the United States. The book contributes to existing scholarship on solidarity with Central America in the United States, but Perla’s approach is unique because he emphasises the decisive, foundational role played by Central Americans in the development of the solidarity movement.

Perla’s choice of targets and questions is astute. He notes that Latin Americanists’ view of the Sandinista Revolution is dominated by the Sandinistas’ electoral loss in 1990, and that post-1990 scholarship has sought to explain the Sandinistas’ failure. Within international relations (IR), in contrast, the Contra War is considered as a ‘loss’ for Reagan. Perla sites his work firmly within the latter field, arguing that the US effort in Nicaragua had been fully defeated, militarily and politically, by the end of the Reagan presidency. However, he argues that IR scholars have failed to accurately explain Reagan’s defeat, because they do not recognise the power that can be wielded by poor, marginalised states in asymmetric conflicts. This blind spot is further exacerbated by IR scholars’ failure to account for Latin American agency within US–Latin American relations. Perla therefore seeks to use the Nicaraguan example to make a broader case for theoretical shifts within IR.

The first half of the book, which provides context for the argument, consists of four chapters. They provide a brief history of US–Nicaraguan relations; an overview of the relevant debates within IR; an analysis of the Sandinista response to US aggression within Nicaragua, drawn mainly from secondary sources; and a history of the development of the solidarity movement in the United States, which draws on multiple interviews with activists. The last of these four chapters is perhaps the strongest section of the book. It demonstrates clearly that the work of Nicaraguan Sandinistas based in the United States and US-born Central Americans was crucial to the development of the movement. Perla’s approach here is supportive but not hagiographic: the discussion of the way in which the conflicts between the FSLN’s three ‘tendencies’ played out on the streets of San Francisco and Los Angeles, for example, is particularly fascinating.

Elsewhere, Perla’s clear commitment to the Revolution’s goals can skew the picture a little. His account of the Revolution’s response to US aggression within Nicaragua draws on a rich, engaged, but also constructively critical literature. Perla often omits the criticism, so that his summary does not always fully reflect the scholarship that he cites. For example, he rightly suggests that the second wave of the Sandinista agrarian reform was instrumental in strengthening support for the Revolution in the countryside, but neglects to mention that the first wave of reform had played a key role in