

Convection currents in Latin American and Caribbean Geo-aesthetics

Panel proposal for the ASLE Biennial Conference.
Portland, Oregon on July 9-12, 2023

Organizers:

Alejandra Decker, University of California, Berkeley.

Alejandro Ponce de León, University of California, Davis.

Much like tectonic plates, which are shifted by underground convection currents that transfer heat and exert pressure from below, Latin American and Caribbean aesthetics form in fluid exchange with planetary forces and the region's geological processes. From rock formations to hydrological cycles, aesthetics assemble around oft-contested geological features, engendering deep social lives that converge, shift, erupt, and leak in many directions. To strategically attend to the slippery aesthetics shaped by, and shaping, processes of geological modernity in Latin America and the Caribbean, this panel proposes an alliance between material ecocriticism and Science and Technology Studies (STS). More specifically, this panel will address the composition of aesthetics around geological forces in Latin American and Caribbean art, literature, and technoscience. To do so, we will attend to the emergence of modernist geological imaginaries during the late 19th and early 20th centuries as well as their afterlives in contemporary cultural production, the relationship between literary modernity and the beginnings of engineering and technical education in the region, the encounters between the technical imagination and humanist discourses, and the leakages across genres in literary and technical writings concerned with geological forces, movements, encounters, and bodies.

Recent Latin American ecocritical scholarship has generatively explored the cross-pollination between artistic and literary practices and ecological thinking, often drawing on Amerindian cosmologies to subvert the segregation between human and nonhuman nature(s) (Wylie 2020, Marcone 2017, Merchant 2020). In the spirit of Latin American Cultural Studies scholarship that is attentive to the ambiguities and “the intercrossings, the intertwining of submission and resistance, of contestation and complicity” (Martín-Barbero, 1993 [1987]: 210) in the region's unresolved modernities (García Canclini 1989), the editors of this panel want to propose an interdisciplinary approach to Latin American aesthetics that addresses the *flows* and *leakages* arising from its interaction with modern geological materialities. As a provocation, we will think through the deep *convection currents* that propel conflicts, encounters, and cross-pollinations between different modes of addressing planetary processes and

geological features. We would like to explore some of the following questions: How do geological features and processes emerge in and shape artistic, literary, and scientific culture? What methodological tools or analytical approaches in literary and media studies open up – and in what capacity– scientific and technical writing and design projects to new readings? In what capacity do technoscience and engineering practices move, push, erupt, or leak into literary and humanistic practices? Could these leakages elucidate possible decolonial undertones within Latin American technoscientific thinking? To address some of these questions, we invite presenters to submit presentation proposals about Latin America and the Caribbean that:

- Rethink the relationship between humans and the environment as mediated through technoscientific expertise and experimentation.
- Examine the aesthetics in works of fiction as forms of technical, world-making practices.
- Explore the relationship between writing genres and the disenchantment (Weber 1905) and re-enchantment (Bennett 2001) of planetary and geological features.
- Reflect on literary or artistic works that engage with geological features, are shaped by geological processes, or use the geological as a mode or element for storytelling.
- Map how geo-aesthetic productions assemble geological and extractive times.
- Consider technoscientific and infrastructural projects not only as future-making practices but also as fictional and speculative engagements.
- Study design (artistic, technical, engineering) as the process of form-finding or correspondence between humans, the material, and the environment (Ingold 2013).
- Address how science fictionalizes the geological, and the geological as a fictionalization of science.

To be considered for the panel, please submit a brief bio and a 300-word proposal for your presentation by 15 December 2022. Submissions and questions can be directed to the panel organizers at adecker@berkeley.edu & poncedeleon@ucdavis.edu

We will accept presentations both in English and Spanish. We would like to circulate manuscripts among participants and collectively engage with them before the ASLE Biennial Conference. Manuscripts accepted to this panel will also be considered for publication in a special dossier in a Latin American journal (TBD).

References

- Bennett, Jane. 2001. *The Enchantment of Modern Life: Attachments, Crossings, and Ethics*. Princeton, N.J.
- García Canclini, Néstor. 1989. *Culturas Híbridas: Estrategias Para Entrar y Salir de La Modernidad*. México: Fondo de Cultura Económica.
- Ingold, Tim. 2013. *Making: Anthropology, Archaeology, Art and Architecture*. 1 edition. London ; New York: Routledge.
- Marcone, Jorge. 2017. “Ecología de Un Sueño: Chamanismo, Ecumenismo y Textualidad Amazónicas En Las Tres Mitades de Ino Moxo de César Calvo.” In *Migración y Frontera*, edited by Javier García Liendo, 315–36. Vervuert Verlagsgesellschaft.
- Martín-Barbero, Jesús. 1993. *Communication, Culture and Hegemony: From the Media to Mediations*. Translated by Elizabeth Fox. SAGE Publications.
- Merchant, Paul. 2020. “Cecilia Vicuña’s Liquid Indigeneity.” In *Liquid Ecologies in Latin American and Caribbean Art*, edited by Lisa Blackmore and Liliana Gómez, 187–204. New York and London: Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780367199005-3>.
- Weber, Max. [1905] 2005. *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Translated by Talcott Parsons. London ; New York: Routledge.
- Wylie, Lesley. 2020. *The Poetics of Plants in Spanish American Literature*. Pittsburgh: Pittsburgh University Press.