Drawing, Copying and Pedagogy in Mexico's and Brazil's Art Academies

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One of the principal aims of the conference *Drawing Education: Worldwide!* was the exploration of relations between drawing and artistic pedagogy across the globe. In keeping with this purpose, this chapter will examine the lines of genealogies and indebtedness in the conception of academies, and the differences that regionally specific artistic pedagogy and regulations may have exerted on the very materiality of artistic productions. To put it another way, the lines I trace here are as much empirical on paper as they are ideological in terms of the copies of models onto a colonial site. By copies, I refer, on the one hand, to the academic curricular practice of drawing copies of prints, plaster castes and *écorchés*, as well as, on the other, to the replication of institutions. These were institutions premised on the creation of original art but whose curriculum – paradoxically – was based on notions of copies and imitation. I will not delve into the lengthy trajectory of the philosophical theories concerning mimesis and imitation as that would lead us well beyond the parameters of this essay. Instead, I point to these institutional contradictions – the teaching of the creation of originals via a process of copying – by way of asking where the difference between these similarly based artistic products and their institutions lies. The question of copies is especially crucial to the cases of Latin America in point here because so much of the early historiography of colonial Latin American art concerns copying (namely of the transfer of themes and formal languages from Europe).

In this chapter – which emerges from an in-progress book project on academies of art in Latin America – I will focus my discussion on the specific case examples of Mexico's and Brazil's academies of fine arts, and their statutes in relation to European models. Mexico City's was the oldest and most significant, royally sanctioned academy in the Americas while Rio's offers a useful imperial contrast to other monarchical and national lineages.[1]

1 There were several earlier schools of art, of course, such as the sixteenth-century Colegio de San Andrés in Quito, but Mexico City's San Carlos Academy was the first in the Americas to

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The pedagogy of copying, along with statutes, decrees, and other administrative documents, worked to construct 'copies' – not always equal in Latin America – of European academies of art that served as their models. On the one hand, copying was a tactic that allowed for the institutionalization of Spain's powers over its colonies by the extension of official regulations. The duplication of curriculum across academies, and the repetitive training exercises, on the other, ensured that the vision of elites would be extended and propagated across all local schools.

While research has been completed on the academic artistic training and the founding statutes of the royal academies in Mexico and Brazil, I wish to bring these two elements of training and statutes together. The very attempts to regulate these institutions through statutes, and their implementation through curricular practice needs to be more carefully examined for these regional cases. I argue that the practice of drawing through copies was integrally tied to the replication of academies as an institution. In order to argue my case, I will first tackle the practice of drawing copies as central to an arts academy curriculum, then proceed to examine how that practice is related to academic statutes.

Drawing and copying as pedagogy

In regard to the academic curriculum, proficiency at drawing the human figure, as is well-known, was a requirement for artists in order that they would be able to fulfill commissions of the highest valued subject categories of history, allegory and religious painting and sculpture. As such, the copying of the human body was placed – both literally in terms of space and figuratively in terms of power – at the center of an academy curriculum. This placement and privileging of the live model was a purposeful, politically symbolic sign of power; for the use of life models was the exclusive domain (in many countries, by law) of royally sanctioned academies in the West; a privilege that had distinguished academies from guilds since the seventeenth century, and that was a legal distinction that continued well into the nineteenth century in many countries. It further helped maintain control of student populations, and of who could or could not progress to become 'master' painters with access to the most lucrative of patrons and commissions.[2]

The curriculum was a sequential, methodical, and disciplinary one. It began early in the student's academic career with drawing from prints, then on to plaster copies of antique statues and, finally, to the live human figure to produce *académies*, as the drawing of a nude model was called. And this would be well before the student

receive *royal* sanction and support. On the origins and historiography of this Academy, see: Hernández-Durán 2017; Báez Macías 2009; Báez Macías 2005, p. 28; Pérez 1871, p. 139.

2 Boime 1994; Nochlin 1988.

was even allowed to pick up a brush. As such, drawing was the central pedagogical tool through which this system functioned.[3] Akagi and Yamaguchi have shown that this was a method – a sequential system, the roots of which were with Pestalozzi – that was extended into Japan by the late nineteenth and into China in the early twentieth centuries.[4] In Japan and in other countries, the sketches, curriculum plans and general administration of art schools were, for the most part, freely selected and adopted. In contrast, in Mexico and other Spanish colonies, the models were not only prescribed but mandated by royal decrees. This is not to say that local actors and audiences were passive receivers of the mandates of the colonizer or central government.[5]

In Mexico, and as described from the very first documents for the creation of an official academy in 1783 (what would become a few decades later the Real Academia de San Carlos de Nueva España). Students would begin the three- to four-year course of studies in painting with a regiment of copying of geometric shapes, followed by copying of fragments or body parts often from engravings or plaster casts. In the second level, the copying would proceed to the drawing of full stucco models, and finally in the third year, drawing the live human figure in postures often based on antique statues, plaster copies of which were also to be found in the academy collections.[6] This system of creating drawings based on copies of antique plaster casts continued well into the twentieth century in Latin America as manifest by the photographs of student works from the School of Fine Arts in Costa Rica (*» Figs. 1 and 2*).

Likewise, for the case of early nineteenth-century Brazil – then, the seat of the government of Portugal and its dominions – the importance of copying through drawing is emphasized in repeated passages of the 1816 proposal by Joachim Lebreton (1760–1819) – who formed part of the so-called 'French Mission' called to Brazil to create various cultural institutions – including an Academy of Science and Arts. In keeping with current academic practices, the curriculum was divided into three levels starting with the basic drawing of geometric shapes, and copying based on engravings, and then onto the life drawing of the model in the atelier under the direction of a history subject painter.[7] The 1820 and subsequent statutes and reforms continued to

3 Anton Raphael Mengs, who was called to the Madrid Bourbon court of Carlos III in 1761, had made his case for the centrality and importance of drawing less than a decade earlier. Müller-Bechtel 2013.
4 Akagi/Yamaguchi 2015; Zheng 2016, pp. 150–151.
5 In this regard, see the following for an examination of the way local elites competed and jostled with differing understandings of the need and functions of an official academy in their respective countries of Mexico, Cuba and Brazil: Deans-Smith 2010; Niell 2013; Cardoso Denis 2000.
6 Fuentes Rojas 1986, p. 14.
7 Lebreton 1959. See also: *Dezenovevinte. Arte no Brasil do Século e Início do XX*: http://www.dezenovevinte.net [20.6.2016].

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Fig. 1 Photographer unknown, *Trozo de la exposición de dibujos de la Escuela de Bellas Artes*, in: *Pandemonium. Revista Quincenal Ilustrada de Ciencias, Letras y Artes,* 9.109 (April 25, 1914), p. 363.

Fig. 2 Photographer unknown, *Otro lado de la exposición*, in: *Pandemonium. Revista Quincenal Ilustrada de Ciencias, Letras y Artes,* 9.109 (April 25, 1914), p. 364.

situate copying through drawing, particularly of the human figure, at the center of its curriculum.[8]

The entire arts pedagogy of the academic system in these two early Latin American academies was dependent upon an increasingly standardized formula of repetition and copying with a special focus on the drawing of the human figure. As is clear, the primary role of drawing as a pedagogical tool cannot be separated from its methodical application of copying. Part of the reason for the primacy of the use of drawing in this method is, of course, a practical and economic one: in terms of daily pedagogic practice, it was not possible to produce copies in other media so readily and on a daily basis (for example, sculpture); the slower execution in other media would have been a disadvantage not only in terms of the speedy progress of classes of students, but also detrimental to the belief in repetitive exercises as a vehicle for the development of eye-hand coordination. Even so, we might see that time and economy also had their regulating effect. This methodical application of drawing and copying was, indeed, part of a system of disciplinary apparatuses that Foucault states was based upon the three instruments of hierarchical observation, normalizing judgment, and

8 The importance of the nude is underscored in the Brazil academy's 1820 Statutes (article I, no. 4) by it being required one hour a day for students: *Estatutos da Imperial Academia e Escola das Bellas Artes, 1820*, transcribed by Alberto Cipiniuk in: *Dezenovevinte. Arte no Brasil do Século e Início do XX*: http://www.dezenovevinte.net [20.6.2016]. The 1831 reforms by Jose Lino Coutinho added anatomy and physiology to the requirements (chap. II, article 2) and spoke of the necessity of copying from plaster casts (chap. II, article 5), reproduced in *Dezenovevinte. Arte no Brasil do Século e Início do XX*: http://www.dezenovevinte.net [20.6.2016].

examination.[9] Students in these types of centralized systems, that must include art academies, would be judged and ranked through constant observation, testing, and record keeping.

Teaching was based on the principle that the students proceed from "the part to the whole."[10] A new structural relation between theory and practice was also set up, whereby the codification and examination of the parts would not be explained without the ensemble (and vice versa).[11] This method of academic training was a bit like the method of Dr. Frankenstein, whereby artists attempted to infuse the life of the *beau ideal* into an otherwise cadaverous assemblage of purely 'imitative' or copied parts. The process of assemblage and animation – that is, of learning the act of original creation – therefore began by copying (with graphite or *conté*) fragments and ultimately the live model.

As I have argued elsewhere, the highly structured system in these academies was further supported by a number of tools including training manuals and even the very design of the classrooms.[12] Through the mandated selection of anatomy manuals, models, positions and specific plaster casts, many of which were copied in drawings again and again, a uniformity of design was established.[13] But the uniformity of students' drawing was further ensured through the interior layout of life drawing classrooms where controlled amphitheater-style assigned seating, not to mention the occasional use of manipulated lighting, constructed the students as a holistic body and guided their views toward producing similar representations of the nude model positioned at center stage. It was a performance that allowed the academy to assert and replicate its own power, quite literally, as students were taught to draw academies within the real and politically symbolic center of the academy. In other words, this system was a tautology that reified the very centrality of the academies distinguishing power, namely, drawing from the life model.

9 Foucault 1979, pp. 170, 233–236.

10 In the words of Boime in his seminal study of the French academic method (Boime 1971, pp. 19, 24), "by grouping elements into an ensemble of the stereotyped pose" students were helped "in reproducing the model before him."

11 As Roland Barthes has argued regarding the plates of the Encyclopedie (Barthes 1980).

12 Vázquez 1999. For an elaboration upon Foucault's notions of disciplinary architecture, see Markus 1993.

13 Lebreton writes of the importance of the use of plaster statues as models, such as in Mexico's fine collection that he mentions (Lebreton 1959, p. 297). For Mexico's and Spain's academies, the anatomical proportion treatises of Charles Lebrun (1619–1690) and Gérard Audran (1640–1703) were among the preferred choices. Báez Macías (2001, p. 11) mentions these works as being in the Mexican academy library.

Mexico's & Brazil's statutes

If the curriculum was based on systematic and repetitive exercises of copying focused on the drawing of the nude human figure, and reinforced through the very physical organization of the academic life drawing room, then we need to see how that curricular practice of copying was itself an expansion and replication (at least in administrative bureaucratic terms) of academies from Europe to the Americas. Filtered through centuries of philological and philosophical debate concerning mimesis – again beyond the limits of this essay – the question of imitation and copies appears in the statutes and foundational documents in terms of ascribed origins, and in terms of curricular practices within these institutions. Although there were earlier royal decrees, the statutes were *the* authoritative code of the Academy and determined much of the politics and curriculum for how art should be produced at those important sites. Drawing and copying were at its center.

The founding statutes of Mexico's Real Academia de Bellas Artes de San Carlos published in 1785 state explicitly that the institution was to be modeled on Spain's already well-established academies, namely Madrid's San Fernando academy, and to a lesser extent, Valencia's San Carlos Academy.[14] They state that Mexico City's academy statutes and organization "should be as uniform as possible with those of the Academy of San Fernando [Madrid; O.V.]".[15] Indeed, a quick look at the statutes of the Madrid academy reveals in certain sections an almost word for word correspondence to those of colonial Mexico.[16] Evidence of duplication is further supported by the fact that Jose Antonio Gil, the likely writer of the Mexican academy's statutes, brought a copy of the San Fernando academy statutes with him from Spain to serve as a model and reference.[17]

14 In the case of Mexico, the statutes were published and copies sent to tribunals, courts, and other administrative units throughout the viceroyalty (Charlot 1963, p. 26). These seem to have been, in practice, largely internal documents to be referred to by academicians and administrators of the San Carlos Academy. Madrid's San Fernando academy was officially decreed in 1752 and its statutes published in 1757. Valencia's San Carlos academy was founded in 1768 and its statutes finalized the same year (though Valencia's San Carlos was preceded by the Valencia academy of Santa Barbara, created in 1753).

15 Indeed, the 1781 proposal as well as King Charles III's 1783 Royal Order approving the establishment of the Mexican academy make clear that the model of the statutes would be that of Madrid. The royal order stated "que esta Junta se dedique desde luego a formar los Estatutos para su regimen y gobierno uniformándolos, en quanto [sic] sea adaptable, a los de la Academia de San Fernando." Real Orden, 25 de diciembre, 1783, reproduced in Marley 1984, doc. II; and *Estatutos de la Academia* 1852. Diego Angulo Iñiguez suggested that this was largely to facilitate pensions (Angulo Iñiguez 1935, p. 11). However, such an explanation ignores the significance of an attempted duplication of administrative systems under a colonial rule.

16 *Estatutos de la Real Academia de San Fernando*, Madrid 1757; *Estatutos de la Real Academia de San Carlos,* Valencia 1768. On the Madrid academy, see Bédat 1973 and Úbeda de los Cobos 1988. For Valencia, see Garín Ortíz de Taranco 1945.

17 Báez Macías 2001, p. 15. Still further, replication and the ability to reproduce exacting copies was, even before a curriculum determined its practice, at the heart of the academy. That

In regard to Brazil's case, the Imperial Academy emerges, like Mexico's, out of similar proposals for a school with 'double' purposes; that is, a school for professional mechanical training that required practice of drawing (that would serve nationalist and mercantilist causes of liberation), and one with aesthetic theoretical concerns for upholding traditions and continuity, and at the service of elites who controlled government and businesses.[18] What is curious and significant of three of the most significant foundational documents of Brazil's academy is the changing attributions to an original model. The statements of the earliest official proposals for an arts school in 1816 drawn up by Joachim Lebreton specifically gave praise to Mexico, the oldest official academy of the New World. Quoting the naturalist explorer Alexander von Humboldt, he argued that Mexico's Academy of Noble Arts owed its existence to Mexican patriotism, and argued that Brazil merited an art school of its own, concluding Mexico was the appropriate model and that the establishment of the academy in Rio "would happen as occurred in the capital of Mexico, with few modifications".[19] Interestingly, the Brazil academy's decrees four years later (1820) no longer point solely to Mexico as an inspirational model as had the earliest drafts but instead state that Rio's Academy should be founded on the model of the English Royal Academy (founded 1768).[20] This is all the more curious given that much of Rio's academic reforms of 1831, as Rocha Leite and others have shown, were largely based on French models and, later, the system of the Ecole de Beaux Arts. Copying through drawing continued to be at the center of the curriculum as well.[21] Rivalries among French and Brazilian artists and administrators aside, scholars have shown that the variations in attributions of original models for the Rio academy can also be explained by Brazil's shifting political alliances between

academy was born out of the metal casting and engraving talents of Gil, who had been engraver to the Spanish king. Gil arrived in Mexico by 1778 in order to supervise metal casting in the Casa de Moneda (the mint) and there he opened a school of engraving which would become the foundation of the future academy. The first motion to transform the school of engraving into an academy was made in 1781 by the director of the Casa de Moneda (Fernando Jose Mangino) to Viceroy Matías de Gálvez. The charters were printed in 1785 and Gil became director. On Gil and the connections between the engraving school at the mint and the origins of the academy, see Donahue-Wallace 2017, especially chap. 4.

18 As such, the Mexican case further exemplifies the direct connection between the development of a school of engraving as a necessary trade, and an academy of art, both as nation-building institutions founded upon and teaching the basic skill of drawing (Charlot 1963, p. 25).

19 "Que aconteceria como ocorreu na capital do México, com poucas modificações". It should be noted that, in spite of the attribution of Mexico as an originary source, Lebreton mentions almost exclusively French and Dutch artists as the *best* models (Poussin, Vernet, among these) declaring specifically that France's academy is "incontestably much superior to all other schools that teach the fine arts." Lebreton 1959, [p. 1, 2, 4, 7]. See also *Dezenovevinte. Arte no Brasil do Século e Início do XX*: http://www.dezenovevinte.net [01.02.2009].

20 By 1820 when the decrees for the official founding of the Imperial Academy of Fine Arts in Rio were finally written, the earlier plans for an art school had been either lost or ignored (the status of Lebreton's proposal at the time of the writing of the 1820 decree is unknown). Taunay 1983, p. 162.

21 Da Rocha Leite 2009.

France and England during the years following the defeat of Bonaparte, and the restoration.[22] Yet, my point here hasn't been to find a true, original model or source in any of these academy cases but rather to examine the lineages of attributed sources in the statutes and decrees in relation to manual copying within the academy.

Differences in the statutes and copies

We thus have a series of significant documents detailing the founding of two of the most important art academies in Latin America, and which make claims of these institutions being copies of earlier models or of each other. In the case of Mexico, its statutes mandated that the academy be copied based on Spain's. In the case of Brazil's, we have seen multiple attributions for the sources of the Rio de Janeiro's academy, even while the founders often point to artists from other nation's academies as better models. We have also seen how curriculum helped control the production of copies. But a tracing of genealogies of the statutes, and the actual copied lines on paper also begin to manifest differences between the originating model and subsequent copies.

Indeed, there were differences produced by the copying of statutes as well as in the copying that took place in the drawing classroom. For example, one of the principal differences between Mexico's and Spain's statutes was the extra measures of disciplinary powers – including corporal punishment and incarceration – given to directors in Mexico's academy statutes, but which are absent in Spain's.[23] That difference also helps explain not only the correlation between correction as pedagogy and discipline as colonial violence, but the shifting political situation between Spain and Mexico. The differences suggest that adjustments in Mexico's copy of the Spanish statutes were necessary for academic practices to be adapted to the different political and social demands of colonial and national powers.

In terms of life drawing techniques, finished paintings and sculpture, many of the students' productions from specific periods *appear* formally similar across academies. Various scholars of the case of Brazil have examined some of these differences among academic drawings. They have analyzed the representation of Native American or Afro-Brazilian human figures in Brazilian and Mexican painting. For example, while indigenous models were frequently used in certain Latin American academies' drawing classes, their ethnic and racialized features were erased and rarely appeared in finished canvases placed on public display in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.[24] Beginning in the middle of the century, and through the later nineteenth century, however, *indigenismo* and nationalist currents as well as naturalism in the

22 Dias 2004.
23 Vázquez 1999.
24 Dahn Battista 2011; Dias 2007.

pictorial arts produced an inversion: in later nineteenth-century productions, the previously antique Greco-Roman or European ideal on painting (even when based on an indigenous live model) became the indigenous Latin American subject on a finished canvas or in marble. That is to say, naturalism and realism had allowed for a greater representation (alongside of, and perhaps impelled by, the necessities of anthropology and other human sciences).

Numerous theoretical models help us understand how copying and imitation in curricular practice, and mimesis in theories, may have supported or been supported by colonial projects. Enlightening are the models previously suggested by Homi K. Bhabha in his assessment that "mimicry emerges as one of the most elusive and effective strategies of colonial power and knowledge" or of Timothy Mitchell's examination of Cairo Schools replication of an English "original" model, as means of disciplinary colonial power.[25] However, critiques of certain earlier colonial models have argued the colonial relations were neither enacted upon a passive colonized people, nor between a homogenized colonizer or colonized. Indeed, Rafael Cardoso's assessment of Brazil's academy as something of a "middle ground between colonizer and colonized" is helpful in this regard.[26]

Conclusion

Copying, therefore, whether in terms of statutes creating like academies, or through drawing based on an earlier model, never produces a replica but changes, subtracts, and adds to the extant model. Derrida, in his analyses of Rousseau, takes engraving as a metaphor for, or as a copy of, the model of art. He argues that whatever is added to any history of an origin "is nothing but the story of the separation." Mimesis, in Derrida's estimation of Rousseau, is but a supplement that "adds *nothing*". He asks, therefore, if a copy [as a supplement; O.V.] adds nothing then "is it not useless?"[27] We have arrived at the contradiction with which I began this chapter; namely, and again borrowing from Derrida, the academy is a "machine" or engine of repetition. It is a mechanistic repetition of events signaled as an organic and creative, that is the creation

25 Bhabha 1984, p. 126. Mitchell does, however, concede that "It is not known how faithfully [the Cairo school founded in 1847] was modelled on the English original, although the Lancaster school was actively promoted abroad by its English proponents as a model, whose geometric pattern and mathematical functioning could be exactly reproduced abroad, as it was, in almost every part of the world". Mitchell 1991, p. 71.

26 Cardoso Denis 2000, p. 65: "The Americas provide not one but several different examples of attempts to negotiate the fundamental cultural difference between being European and being Western, which do not fit the traditional 'colonial other' mold and which are out?, perhaps, to redefine our very understanding of Western culture - moving it away from a simple dualism with the east and towards some notion of desire for an ever-shifting frontier of the new and unfamiliar."

27 Derrida 1997, pp. 199, 203.

Fig. 3 Felicien Myrbach-Rheinfeldt, *Candidates for Admission to the Paris Salon*, late nineteenth/early twentieth century, pen, brush, ink and graphite, 28 x 45.6 cm, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

of an original, unique work of art.[28] And while all academies may not have suffered the consequential inundation of artistic productions issued by such an efficient machine (as in, for example, the French academies and their salons – » *Fig. 3*), they nonetheless bore the weight of this pedagogical system.

Academies were not homogeneous institutions. Rather, they were individually adapted to the different political and social demands of colonial and national powers. As we have seen, this was the case for Latin America's academies; copied directly from singular European models by royal decree – as in the case of Mexico – or on other ultra-imperial models as in the case of Brazil. If, as one recent philosopher stated, "pedagogy cannot help but encounter the problem of imitation"[29] then extrapolating from that dictum, we should state here that the inverse is also probable: that imitation must ultimately encounter and deal with problems of pedagogy.

28 There "is no thinking of the event, it seems, without some sensitivity, without an *aesthetic* affect and some presumption of living organicity. The machine, on the contrary, is destined to repetition. It is destined, that is, to reproduce impassively, imperceptibly, without organ or organicity, received commands." Derrida 2002, p. 72.

29 Derrida 1997, p. 204.

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