

José Antonio Fernández-Muro: *Geometry in Transfer*  
Curated by Megan Kincaid

November 11, 2021–February 12, 2022

ISLAA  
50 East 78th Street  
New York, NY 10075

The Institute for Studies on Latin American Art (ISLAA) is pleased to announce *José Antonio Fernández-Muro: Geometry in Transfer*, curated by Megan Kincaid. The second in a series on Latin American modernism at ISLAA, this exhibition is the first to comprehensively explore the Spanish Argentine artist's luminous transfer paintings, which he developed in Buenos Aires in the 1950s and later elaborated on while living in New York City in the 1960s.

Rather than isolate what the artist termed his two “fundamental epochs” in Buenos Aires and New York, this exhibition emphasizes their critical continuities—visual, material, and ideological—to reveal Fernández-Muro's displacement and transformation of Argentine abstraction. Presenting nine transfer paintings from ISLAA's collection, it begins with two works produced during an understudied moment in Argentine modernism following the major breakthroughs, and unrealized utopian promises, of the artists associated with Asociación Arte Concreto-Invención and Grupo Madí. These early transfer paintings represent a reckoning with the limitations of concretism, integrating directions in abstraction from abroad and incorporating discoveries resulting from his participation in the collective *Buen diseño para la industria* in the mid-1950s. With dizzying optical effects and expressive surfaces, achieved by overlaying perforated metal grates and stencils onto complex, sweeping geometric assemblies, this transitional output pushed his painterly rhetoric beyond the constraints of hard-edged geometry, evoking associations with OpArt and lyrical abstraction alike.

After relocating to Manhattan in the 1960s, Fernández-Muro returned to recognizable imagery, re-creating the visual imaginary of the urban landscape through impressions of sidewalks, sewer grates, and manhole covers. Celebrated and widely collected at the time, these frottage and embossed aluminum foil works evidence Fernández-Muro's contact with the pervasive Pop art and assemblage sensibilities germinating in New York. With their insistent geometries, found in transfers of circular manhole covers or rectangular sewer grates, and their recourse to the grid, evident in rows of pennies or stamps, the paintings from his New York period further teased at the seams of rigid, non-representational abstraction.

The title of the exhibition, *Geometry in Transfer*, refers at once to Fernández-Muro's expansion of geometric abstraction and his translation of Argentine modernist painting amid the visual preoccupations of the 1960s New York avant-garde. In the show's concluding section, four small compositions that each focus on a single symbol or device are presented alongside never-before-displayed archival materials that clarify the artist's rigorous multi-step process—affirming his unique contributions to mid-century painting.

*José Antonio Fernández-Muro: Geometry in Transfer* is accompanied by a publication including an essay by curator Megan Kincaid. Physical copies are available free of charge at ISLAA and for download online.

ISLAA is open from 2 to 5 PM on Tuesday and from 2 to 7 PM on Wednesday through Friday. Proof of vaccination is required in line with New York City regulations. Guests must wear masks and adhere to all COVID-19 guidelines while on-site. Although walk-ins are allowed, visitors are encouraged to book appointments in advance through ISLAA's online scheduler.

For press inquiries, please email Olivia Casa, ISLAA's exhibition and curatorial manager, at [olivia.casa@islaa.org](mailto:olivia.casa@islaa.org).

## EXHIBITION TALKS

In conjunction with the exhibition, ISLAA will present a series of live online public programs and pre-recorded lectures that will showcase new research and approaches to Fernández-Muro's expansive practice and technical facility.

A panel will take place on November 30 as part of the Latin American Forum at The Institute of Fine Arts, New York University, a platform proudly sponsored by ISLAA since 2013. Featuring talks by art historians Karen Grimson, Megan Kincaid, Juan Gabriel Ramírez Bolívar, and Delia Solomons, this event will present recent scholarship on the painterly output of Fernández-Muro and fellow artist Sarah Grilo, his spouse, within the context of 1960s New York.

Alongside this live program, ISLAA will publish two video lectures by Megan Kincaid on Fernández-Muro's transfer paintings, and by art historian Juanita Solano Roa on the inclusion of Fernández-Muro's prize-winning painting *Disparo en la espalda* (Shot in the Back, 1968) in the 1968 Coltejer Biennial in Medellín.

The pre-recorded lectures and the registration link for the panel on November 30 will be added to ISLAA's website in November.

## ABOUT THE CURATOR

Megan Kincaid is an art historian and curator of modern and contemporary art. She is currently an adjunct instructor at New York University and a doctoral candidate at the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University. She holds a BA in Art History from Columbia University, summa cum laude, Phi Beta Kappa. Kincaid co-curated the exhibitions *Cauleen Smith, H-E-L-L-O: To Do All At Once* (2021) and *Fanny Sanín's New York: The Critical Decade, 1971–1981* (2020–21), both at the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University, and assisted with the curation of *Charles White: A Retrospective* (2018–19) at the Museum of Modern Art, New York. The Museum of Modern Art and New York University, among others, have published her writing. Most recently,

she organized an exhibition of early drawings by Susan Te Kahurangi King and published an essay on new sculptures by Daniel Lind-Ramos.

## VISTAS 6: SARAH GRILO AND JOSÉ ANTONIO FERNÁNDEZ-MURO

Coinciding with the exhibition, the sixth issue of ISLAA's serial publication *Vistas: Critical Approaches to Modern and Contemporary Latin American Art* is devoted to Fernández-Muro and fellow artist Sarah Grilo, his spouse. This issue was made possible thanks to the Estate of Sarah Grilo and José Antonio Fernández-Muro, which generously loaned their archive to ISLAA. *José Antonio Fernández-Muro: Geometry in Transfer* and *Vistas 6: Sarah Grilo and José Antonio Fernández-Muro* are the result of several research initiatives: the ISLAA Writer in Residence program, the ISLAA Travel Grant program, and the Duke House Exhibition Series at The Institute of Fine Arts, NYU. Physical copies of *Vistas 6* are available free of charge at ISLAA and for download online.

## ABOUT THE ARCHIVE

ISLAA is honored to have repositied the Archive of Sarah Grilo and José Antonio Fernández-Muro since 2019. Spanning three decades from the 1950s to the 1980s, it charts the two painters' artistic progressions as they experimented with different styles and forged forward in their careers, while offering an intimate glimpse into their shared familial life. It consists of a wide array of unique materials, including negatives by photographer Lisl Steiner; original photographs by Grete Stern, Hans Namuth, and Henry Grossman; international press clippings; and exhibition catalogues in several languages. To learn more about the archive, which is on loan from the Estates of Sarah Grilo and José Antonio Fernández-Muro, please visit our website.

## ABOUT ISLAA'S EXHIBITIONS PROGRAM

Inaugurated in 2019, ISLAA's exhibitions program presents curatorial projects that expand existing narratives of modern and contemporary art by focusing on specific figures, movements, and topics in Latin American art. Curators are invited to draw from ISLAA's library, archive, and collection to develop original research and produce new exhibitions for presentation at ISLAA's New York City space. The program seeks to foster innovation within the curatorial field and to offer scholars and arts professionals the opportunity to realize exceptional exhibitions that promote the visibility and study of Latin American art.