

Iconographic analysis of pictorial type, as a nation builder in argentina during the first half of the nineteenth century (1810 - 1852)

Análisis iconográfico de tipo pictórico, como formador de nación en argentina durante la primera mitad del siglo XIX (1810-1852)

Análise iconográfica do tipo pictórico, como formador de nações na argentina durante a primeira metade do século XIX (1810-1852)

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Abstract

This article analyzes representative examples of pictorial art in Argentina during the first half of the 19th century through the study of iconographic representations, which, when compared with written sources, reveal allegories, symbols and national identities. These show the socio-cultural transitions of a political nature, which were portrayed by foreign and native artists in the visual imaginary comprised of two periods 1810-1829 and 1830-1852. In the first, the beginnings of modern Argentine pictorial art, express in their works the heroic legacy left by the liberating campaigns and the heroes of the country, within the framework of neoclassicism that will be reflected throughout the first half of the 19th century. In the second period, the themes and symbols change to reflect a nationalism that gained strength through the image as a visual discourse through the dictatorial regime of General Juan Manuel de Rosas.

Key words: Pictorial art; Argentina; Customs; Identity; Iconographic Analysis; Nation state.

Resumen

Este artículo analiza ejemplos representativos del arte pictórico en Argentina durante la primera mitad del siglo XIX mediante el estudio de representaciones iconográficas, que, al ser cotejadas con fuentes escritas, arrojan alegorías, símbolos e identidades nacionales. Estas evidencian las transiciones socioculturales de tipo político, que fueron retratadas por artistas extranjeros y nativos en el imaginario visual comprendido por dos periodos: 1810- 1829 y 1830 - 1852. En el primero, los inicios del arte pictórico moderno argentino, expresan en sus obras el legado heroico que dejaron las campañas libertadoras y los próceres de la patria, dentro del marco del neoclasicismo que se verá reflejado a lo largo de la primera mitad del siglo XIX. En el segundo periodo cambian los temas y símbolos para reflejar un nacionalismo que tomó fuerza mediante la imagen como discurso visual por medio del régimen dictatorial del general Juan Manuel de Rosas.

Palabras clave: Arte pictórico; Argentina; Costumbres; Identidad; Análisis Iconográfico; Estado-Nación.

Resumo

Este artigo analisa exemplos representativos da arte pictórica na Argentina durante a primeira metade do século XIX através do estudo das representações iconográficas, que, quando comparadas com fontes escritas, revelam alegorias, símbolos e identidades nacionais. Estas mostram as transições socioculturais de natureza política, que foram retratadas por artistas estrangeiros e nativos no imaginário visual dos dois períodos 1810-1829 e 1830-1852. No primeiro período, o início da arte pictórica argentina moderna exprime nas suas obras o legado heróico deixado pelas campanhas de libertação e pelos heróis do país, no quadro do neoclasicismo que se reflectiria ao longo da primeira metade do século XIX. No segundo período, os temas e símbolos mudaram para reflectir um nacionalismo que ganhou força através da imagem como discurso visual por meio do regime ditatorial do General Juan Manuel de Rosas.

Palavras-chave: Arte pictórica; Argentina; Costumes; Identidade; Análise Iconográfica; Estado-Nação.

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INTRODUCTION

The modern pictorial art of the 19th century in Latin America was influenced by artistic manifestations that represented the events that took place in the liberation campaigns as part of the formation of national states in Latin American countries through portraits, military scenarios and scenes of customs. These were materialized through artistic techniques initially inspired by Romanticism and costumbrismo due to the presence of foreign artists and the formation of local artists in certain territories, mainly in what was known as the viceroyalty of the Río de la Plata, currently the province of Buenos Aires. Both the socio-political scenarios and the national processes based on the customs to form a Nation are studied by means of an iconographic analysis, where the main source to find symbols, allegories and cultural manifestations is the visual imaginary, accompanied by pictorial works and written sources that narrate the course of two periodizations (1810-1829) (1829-1852) that show the changes of the existing connection between art and identity processes in the process of the visual representation of the Nation State.

Following the arguments of Annino and Francois (2003), the formation of a nation in the countries of Latin America began in 1810, an event that allowed some characters to participate as heroes of the homeland and forgers of an independent government, which led to a modern Republicanism with democratic purposes, supported by liberation campaigns and political processes that demarcate the constitution of the new regime. The arrival of the second and third decade of the first half of the 19th century in Argentina, brought together actors who acted as political agents, artists (foreigners-nationals) and social groups that dynamized the construction of the nation through artistic, classicist and political cultural manifestations. The decades from 1830 to 1850 were based on an authoritarian nationalism, led by the image as a discourse and adopted by the lower classes of Buenos Aires, who saw General Juan Manuel Rosas as their maximum representative, making propaganda acquire a place in politics and in the identity of the Argentine gaucho.

The image as a visual source, makes iconography and history, a disciplinary body that allows reconstructing events, which have been inscribed in pictorial works of art, and when combined with written sources, reveal visual signs, cosmogonies and socio-cultural accounts that were embodied in a material form, remaining as a legacy in society for members of a nation to reconstruct again and again the historical events that strengthen the collective and national identity.

ARTICLE DEVELOPMENT

Before the government of Juan Manuel de Rosas (1810-1829)

Viñuales (2003) points out that art in Buenos Aires went through several formative processes, starting with the creation in 1799 of the first drawing academy in Buenos Aires. Unfortunately, all this was hindered by the orders of the viceroyalty and the Spanish crown. Breaking with this context, in 1810 Manuel Belgrano tried to promote a new government, which opened the doors to a modern Republicanism, which would have great influence in the liberation campaigns and in the battle scenarios, which would be consolidated as heroic events, led by men presented as courageous and politically apt to shape the first national processes in the Río de la Plata.

According to Viñuales (2003), the formation of art in Argentina begins with the arrival of two artists,



Figure 1

"Battle of Maipo", Théodore Géricault, (1819)



Note: Battle of Maipo won by the Argentine-Chilean army, under the command of General José de San Martín, on April 5, 1818.

Source: (Gericault, 1819) National Museum of Buenos Aires.

the first of English origin in 1816 and 1818, the last of Swiss nationality, the watercolorist Emeric Essex Vidal and the miniaturist Jean Philippe Goulu, who with their techniques portrayed images alluding to the landscape and culture in Argentina.

The interference of foreign artists and travelers in Argentine territory since 1816 made it possible to learn about the techniques used to reproduce portraits of notable people or scenes of customs during the first half of the 19th century; most of the artists who arrived in the port of Buenos Aires were of French origin. In the course of this analysis, the most important artists of the first half of the 19th century will be highlighted for their works according to the symbols and visual manifestations they contributed to the formation of the nation in Argentina.

In the processes of independence, a general appears, San Martín, who led two armies in the battle of Maipo in 1818: he was a symbol of Argentine and Chilean independence, but he is also part of the history of Latin America, as many of his reproductions can be found in the most important art galleries in the world.

This work of art depicts a terrestrial landscape with mountain ranges at the top, in the center of



the work is observed four characters mounted on horseback, which seem to dance as a symbol of high hierarchy and triumph; only one of the equines is of white color, the one that is in profiled position from left to right. The color of the costumes of the horsemen is not evidenced, it is known that most of them have military attire, the one that is in the left margin is represented as a civilian in favor of the cavalry. The character of the white horse has a saber resting in his lower hand, symbol that he has finished the battle and has triumphed in it. The men who are on the right margin without hats or horses are three military men of the royalist army, prisoners in battle and stripped of their military clothing. The hatless horseman is the French soldier Ambrosio Cramer. The left and right margins of the lithograph seem to be cropped, giving the impression that the work could give more detail in its width.

The name of the work is called "Battle of Maipo", alluding to the battle that took place on April 5, 1818, near the city of Santiago de Chile (Chile). It expresses the beginning of a new emancipated era in Argentina and Chile, exalting a moment of great political and national transcendence, where the history of the battle and independence revolves around two characters: Generals José Francisco de San Martín y Matorras, an exceptional man who will stand out for his political participation during the emancipation, and Bernardo O'Higgins Riquelme. They were men from different homelands who had in common the independence of the viceroyalty of the Río de la Plata. Hand in hand with the Chilean and Argentinean armies, they fought against the royalist troops to achieve the independence of their provinces. "The Chilean general expressed: "Glory to the savior of Chile" and San Martín replied: "Chile will never forget his sacrifice by presenting himself to the battlefield with his glorious open wound." (Barni, 2019, p. 1-2)

The symbol that stands out in this work is the representation of two provinces reflected in two armies, which are led by men who have become heroes and saviors. The values of vassalage and obedience do not represent them, instead they appear as figures of a political body that express at the same time the beginning of a new Hispano-American republicanism. "All the new American nations that began to be constituted around 1810, found the need to have heroes that would act as moral, political and military referents". (Giordano, 2009, p. 12).

The artist of this lithograph made in 1819, one year after the Argentine and Chilean patriotic event, was the Frenchman Théodore Géricault, although he did not belong to the group of traveling and foreign artists who were in Argentina, he was the designated artist. According to Viñuales (2003) Ambrosio Crámer, a French military man who participated in the battle of Maipo, by orders of General San Martín was entrusted with the task of looking for him in London, where he lived. He was an artist of universal stature, since his works express the most vivid of reality, introducing in painting an artistic movement of political importance in the first half of the 19th century, Romanticism.

A revolutionary movement of the 19th century was Romanticism. It opened floodgates to passions and feelings in the most diverse moods (...). It influenced political independence movements and national feelings (Abad, 2017. p. 621).

The emotionality of the battle refers to new political horizons, in a reference to the republican system of Roman antiquity and its exceptional men. After the battle scenes, come the memories, which are made visible through the interaction of different inhabitants of Buenos Aires. The following work is a reflection of national identity and collectivity, although its elaboration dates from the fourth decade of the 19th century, it expresses the social dynamics that were present in the decades after 1810, until 1829 during the anniversary of the national holidays.



Figure 2*"Fiestas Mayas" Lithograph by Charles Pellegrini, (1841) Buenos Aires.*

Note: Celebrations that commemorate the date of the emancipation revolution of 1810.

Source: (Pellegrini, 1841) Museo de Bellas Artes de Buenos Aires.

This black and white lithograph portrays a flat terrain, in the background is a square and behind it a notable building of Christian origin with neoclassical style, representative architecture in the artistic boom of His-pano-America during the first half of the 19th century; in the center of the image is the May Pyramid installed in 1811 to celebrate the first anniversary of the patriotic event. "On the first anniversary of the May Revolution of 1810, the May Pyramid was the monumental undertaking that initiated the path of commemorative landmarks. [...]" (Giordano, 2009, p. 12). The pyramids and other symbols such as the "trees of freedom" were appropriated from a heritage that combined Mediterranean antiquity with the referents of the French and American Revolution. On the left margin there is a prize stick, above it are two individuals holding the prize of the person who can take it. At the end of the rod appears waving the flag of the Argentine nation. Distributed throughout the square, there are people in military costumes on horseback and others in all kinds of costumes and of different ages (children, youth, adults) except for the dog. Buenos Aires society was divided into higher and lower classes, however, during the festivities they acted as a whole as a matter of identity and nationalism.

(...) For their part, the families of the elite attended the squares and participated in some games and shows along with the plebs. "These features of the festivity in Buenos Aires especially attracted the attention of travelers who left testimony of their astonishment." (Ministry of Education, 2010, p. 31)

The name of this work is "Fiestas Mayas", alluding to the year after the revolution of the 25th of Mayan Independence.



May 1810 in Argentina, an event that took place in the Plaza de la Victoria, currently known as Plaza de Mayo in Buenos Aires.

This lithograph is the work of French hydraulic engineer and artist Charles Henri Pellegrini made in 1841. It expresses the festivities after independence. It highlights the cultural practices in which the elite and the low society of Buenos Aires took part, this socio-cultural event allows to evidence a shared identity, that of the emancipation and that of the new patriotic government.

Viñuales (2003, pp.31-32) points out that in 1828 the French hydraulic engineer Charles Henri Pellegrini settled in Buenos Aires. His objective was to carry out some works corresponding to the port of the Río de la Plata, which could not be executed due to the unitary revolution. With no other option but to devote himself to drawing as a means of subsistence, he positioned himself as one of the forerunners of Argentine art.

The presence of foreign artists in Buenos Aires had a great impact from the twenties until well into the thirties of the nineteenth century. Everything related to pictorial art during the first half of the 19th century was implanted through new ways of reproducing it by means of foreign techniques. Everything concerning artistic processes after 1835 was carried out during the Rosista regime in Argentina, due to the nationalism that was promoted by the popular classes of Buenos Aires, some foreign artists and the first national artists, highlighting the participation of Carlos Morel, costumbrista artist and servant of the Rosista regime.

During the Rosista regime (1829-1852)

Waldo offers a description of Rosas, the Argentine caudillo:

Second (first male) of the twenty children of which only ten survive from the marriage of Doña Agustina Teresa de Osornio and Don León Ortiz de Rozas, Don Juan Manuel José Domingo was born and baptized in the city of Buenos Aires on March 30, 1793 (...) (Waldo, 1981, p. 4).

Juan Manuel de Rosas belonged to a family of large landowners, and at the same time this allowed him to exercise great political and military power in such a way that since 1827 he began to be the precursor of an incipient nationalism that was different from the previous period. According to Viñuales (2003), when Juan Manuel de Rosas became governor of Buenos Aires, he was able to consolidate a government junta with the different provinces that made up the former viceroyalty of the Río de la Plata. This event allowed Rosas to consolidate Argentina as a nation in formation thanks to the national treaty between the provinces of the littoral. (p.27)

Rosas took office in 1829 as provincial governor, a position he held, with exceptional powers, until 1832. In 1835 the Chamber of Representatives decided to grant him the position again with the renewal of the exceptional powers and the addition of public power, legal instruments that made the Rosasist power system. (Capasso, 2012 p. 1)

It was at that moment that Rosas became a national referent, understanding that what was his own was above any foreign progress. The following work consolidates a visual imaginary that will have great political transcendence in favor and against a bipartisan nationalism led by the pro- paganda and the class struggle in the province of Buenos Aires, during the first half of the 19th century.

REFLECTION ARTICLE

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Figure 3
"Portrait of Juan Manuel de Rosas" by Raymond Quinsac de Monvoisin (1842)



Source: (Monvoisin, 1842) Museo de Bellas Artes de Buenos Aires.

The portrait shows the half-length image of a man with a white complexion, a face with defined features, abundant light brown (or blond) hair, wearing a black poncho, striped in yellow bands with reddish stripes and a white collared shirt. In the background there is a mixture of blue and white forming sunset clouds. The posture reflects the character of this man, leaving only his left hand visible, showing strength and firmness, while at the same time expressing security and imposition so that the performers are infected by the sensation he transmits through his body.

The portrait "Juan Manuel de Rosas" refers to the Argentine general and dictator Rosas (1793-1877), a man recognized for restoring the social and political order of the Argentine nation. The image of the gaucho was a hegemonic tool for federalist propaganda campaigns, as a representative of the countryside against the centralism of Buenos Aires.

This portrait was the work of the French traveler Raymond Quinsac de Monvoisin (1842), it is a representative symbol of the gaucho, the hardy country man and the landowner that materialized the identity of the social classes that politically supported the Rosas regime in its campaigns against all foreign propaganda. This work is the only portrait in which Juan Manuel de Rosas appears promoting a nationalism based on country customs.

Monvoisin stayed in Buenos Aires for three months, coming into contact with the circle of



Rosas, whom he portrayed in the privacy of his residence in Palermo and in which he is seen stripped of his usual military uniform and dressed in a warm poncho (...) (Viñuales, 2003. p. 37).

According to Capasso (2012) the Rosasist hegemony was consolidated through the mandatory use of the punched badge to politically identify the opponents of the regime by not wearing the red band with the face of General Juan Manuel de Rosas, preventing any attempt of rebellion by members of the unitary party, repressing them through discourse and the popular restorative society known as the Mazorca, a political group of police and civilian court that was distributed in the streets of Buenos Aires mainly to enforce the laws of the federal government.

The intimidation produced a reduction among the unitary sympathizers, because the hated ones were less and the persecution was implacable. This hegemony, which in the beginning was a hegemony of images, materialized until it became a reality promoted by society and not by the regime. The Unitarians had no choice but to adopt a submissive position and a nationalist order based on the costumbrist ideas of Rosas, which will be reflected in the following pictorial work. The painting analyzed below shows a conglomerate of nationalist perceptions that evidence the symbols, identities, culture and nation-building through the most common social dynamics of a territory, such as the spaces of provisioning and the interaction between characters who frequent them, showing the expressions that make up the Argentine society of the first half of the nineteenth century.

Figure 4

The cart market in Monserrat Square, Buenos Aires [painting] by Carlos Morel (1844).



Source: (Morel, 1844) Museo de Bellas Artes de Buenos Aires.



This painting concentrates several moments in a single state, the bovines that represent the cattle abundance and the bovine tradition typical of the Argentine pampas and the gaucho culture; in the upper and lower part of the carts, there are musical instruments for sale, animal skins, women and men who negotiate. On the left margin there are men on horseback, carrying out all kinds of activities, among them lighting fires, roasting meat, drinking mate, resting, dialoguing and offering through signs what they are selling; the image of the back of a boy with reddish hair is perceived, there are no men or women with skin complexions different from white, this symbolizes that the nation is made up only of equal beings, we must not forget that "Juan Manuel Rosas was a blond man with blue eyes from a noble family" (Waldo, 1981, p. 1). (Waldo, 1981, p. 4). At the top of the two sides of the wagons the flags are waving and in the sky there are clouds, as if the day were opaque.

This work is called "El mercado de carretas en la plaza Monserrat" (The cart market in Monserrat square), an allegory of the market square during the Viceroyalty of the Río de la Plata, which is currently the border between Chile and the province of Catamarca (Argentina). This work refers to the colonial period, but evidences the country customs that formed the nation during the Rosista regime. It was a point of provisioning and obtaining different products to meet the needs of the inhabitants of the Río de la Plata as the inhabitants of the viceroyalty of Peru, because at that time they were united by the Spanish crown Chile and Argentina, so that they could exchange goods and services between viceroyalties. "The plaza, with its carts, animals, market, people, smells, boliches and bailongos was a not very recommendable neighborhood. [...]" (Revisionistas, 2008, p.1).

The Monserrat square was a border area where inhabitants of the two viceroyalties shared a space, at the same time that they were waiting for him, it is for this reason that the wagons were fully identified with flags of the viceroyalty of Peru and the Río de la Plata to demarcate the social and cultural differences that differentiated them.

This oil painting was the work of the Buenos Aires native artist Carlos Morel in 1844. The painting depicts the sociocultural dynamics that prevailed before the independence of Argentina, however, several symbols to take into account are rescued: the clothing of the Argentine gaucho of the 19th century, the ornaments that accompany them, such as the pot (bombilla or puru) in which the mate is placed to be drunk hot, the gaucho guitar that symbolizes the folk music and its typical Argentine dances such as the cielito and the tango, the cattle together with the pampean horse that has always been the basis of Argentine trade and the main sustenance of the gaucho. The color red was very much emphasized by Carlos Morel in this work, because the federal impact of Rosas' government was transmitted through the customs, showing the political identity as well as the artist's sympathy for the regime.

According to Amigo (2013), Morel, through his costumbrista works, evidences the artistic legacy introduced by traveling and foreign artists in the gaucho territory.

Carlos Morel was an artist appointed by the federal government to show the transformation of the nation through his images reproduced at the time of the transition from the Republican government to federal nationalism. Monserrat Square describes what the individuals who frequented it were like and what their political stance was through the symbolic use of the scarlet red color so common in this work.

Juan Manuel de Rosas was defeated by Justo José de Urquiza in the battle of Monte Caseros, on February 3, 1852, near Buenos Aires and went into exile in England until his death in 1877 (Domínguez, 2003, p.579).



The Rosista regime ended in 1852 but the visual discourse implanted in Argentina was transformed with other ideas of government, and remains as an imaginary source that allows an iconographic analysis of a period of social turbulence, caused by modern pictorial art as a hegemonic tool of nationalist cut that promotes new forms of nation building.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This article starts from the contributions of Viñuales (2003), which allows focusing the research on the processes of independence and the migrations of foreign artists to the territory of the Río de la Plata, followed by an article (Giordano, 2009), which allows analyzing foreign artists as introducers and masters of modern pictorial art in Buenos Aires, expressing the importance of the visual imaginary as a way of reconstructing nation. Capasso (2012) studies the visual discourse during the Rosista regime: overlaps between the public and the private. He deciphers the ways of using the image through propaganda to disseminate a nationalism based on the ideological confrontations between federalists and unitarians, traditional political parties of the first half of the nineteenth century in Argentina.

The text that adopts the concept of nation and all its approaches through cultural, social and political expressions is: Annino and Francois (2003) *Inventing the Nation, Iberoamerica XIX Century*. The following text is the step by step for the elaboration of the iconographic analysis based on three levels (pre iconographic, iconographic, iconological) that with the support of documents allow the identification of modern pictorial works as sources, symbols and representations within the Argentine visual imaginary of the 19th century (Panofsky, 1979), *El significado en las artes visuales*.

The pictorial works selected were the lithographs "Battle of Maipo" by Théodore Géricault (1819), and "Mayan Festivities" by Pellegrini (1841) as representatives of an early period where political identities were formed, different from those captured in "Portrait of Juan Manuel de Rosas" by Raymond Quinsac de Monvoisin (1842) and the painting by Morel "The Wagon Market in Monserrat Square" (1844). These works were chosen because they show the social dynamics that formed the nation in the period that brought great political changes through the image as visual discourse in Argentina, from 1810 to 1852; evincing national reinventions by the social classes of Buenos Aires at that time, taking as a point of reference before the government of Juan Manuel de Rosas (1810-1829), and during the Rosas regime (1829-1852).

OBJECTIVES

- To analyze, through iconographic observations and written sources, how modern pictorial art contributed to the formation of national identity in Argentina during the first half of the 19th century.
- To reconstruct the symbols, allegories and customs that formed a nation in Argentina during the first half of the 19th century, through the use of written sources (1810-1852).
- To carry out an iconographic analysis of the modern pictorial art works selected and reproduced during the first half of the 19th century in Argentina, which contributed to the formation of the national state through the visual imaginary.

METHODOLOGY

Methodologically, it is the result of a qualitative research, based on the elaboration of an iconographic analysis of modern pictorial art works reproduced in Argentina during the first half of the 19th century, making use of Panofsky's (1979) approaches under his three levels of analysis:

Preiconographic: observation, which allows the interpretation of the background landscape, the painter's artistic detail and the representation of some event that inspired the artist to create the work.

Iconographic: the details of the image, such as the symbols (weapons, postures, clothing, characters, landscapes, customs, etc.) observed in the work will be consulted in written sources to understand the different elements that accompanied the historical event. Iconographic analysis is the study of historical themes that received a physical representation with a specific purpose, that of being discovered visually with the support of written sources (Panofsky, 1979).

Iconological: The representation of the image as a cultural context, where it is specifically limited to interpreting the social customs and practices of the time without losing its true meaning (Panofsky, 1979).

CONCLUSIONS

After the independence of 1810, the interference of foreign artists in the territory of the Río de la Plata allowed the Argentine society of that time to recognize, through the elaboration of pictorial works, the battle scenes, commemorations, monuments and scenes of customs that were being developed during the same period; In other words, the most transcendental commemorative milestones during Republicanism and Classicism were evidenced in visual sources that were elaborated shortly after the event, causing identity to be formed consecutively to the point of being perceived as a historical account, likewise the visual imaginary gained strength when the political transformation adhered social actors who were in charge of disseminating through discourse a nationalism based on the socio-cultural practices of the countryside, or in the class struggle that leads to the restoration of a proper regime with political principles inherited from heroes, this time with the intention of preserving what has identified individuals in the body of a nation, such as the colors of the flag, patriotic symbols and festivities that intermingle its citizens through historical memory.

The image as iconographic representation made it possible to compare and identify the social dynamics (from 1810 to 1852) in Argentina to form a nation, evidencing the cultural and political transitions that a territory goes through in the evolution of progress, such as landscape transformations, local customs and governance. The participation of European artists as reconstructors of events and the formation of native artists as promoters of a nationalism, allow to tell the history of the Argentine nation during the first half of the 19th century, through allusive images of pictorial type, which show a period with changing identity processes, where through the written sources it is possible to decipher the symbology in each work and thus to reconstruct the processes that gave rise to Argentina as a nation, in the transition from unitary Republicanism to federal Nationalism. That is why the image as a document and as a work of art, narrates history in a pleasant way and preserves visual signs that in accordance with manuscripts, rediscover the social interactions that have taken place in the processes of independence of Latin American countries during the nineteenth century.



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