

## VIOLENCE

*Forgotten Peace: Reform, Violence, and the Making of Contemporary Colombia*. By Robert A. Karl. Oakland: University of California Press, 2017. Pp. 344. \$85.00 paper.  
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Colombians need not believe in the black legend of their past, but they have awfully good reasons to do so. So argues Robert Karl, in this tight-packed, deeply researched, and graceful narrative, which inserts itself unexpectedly into the nation's historiography.

Historians have pored over the 1940s and 1950s, years of unexplained conflict in Colombia. They have turned now to the 1980s and more recent decades—years of guerrilla insurgencies, paramilitary death squads, drug barons, kidnappings, and the displacement of millions of rural folk. In between, there appeared a more peaceful period largely left to social scientists, characterized by formal coalitions and the like.

It turns out that a lot did happen in the intense late 1950s and early 1960s, as Colombians from many walks of life sought to leave their past behind them and to keep a feared future from coming around. And the few years of considerable peace during that period constituted something so Colombian, so particular, so local, that Karl calls these years, aptly, the 'creole peace.' As Karl carefully sets the context that will lead to this creole peace, his readers gain confidence that they are in capable hands. And it is a good thing, too, for not only is the peace creole, but so is most everything else in Karl's telling, notwithstanding his efforts to tie his stories to those outside. Those of us trained in Latin American history will often feel in these pages as though we have been dropped off the continent.

I wonder whether any other book written by sociologists and lawyers in Latin America has had the reverberations and the real-life, immediate, and long-term historical consequences of the 1962 text *La violencia en Colombia*, written by Monsignor Germán Guzmán, Orlando Fals Borda, and Eduardo Umaña Luna. I mention these three authors in this short review because I am fairly certain that they are so Colombian creole that they will be unknown to most scholars outside of Colombia. Far more aware of the horrors of the recent past than almost any other Colombian, the three authors did not believe in the black legend of their nation's history. They set out to demonstrate with scientific objectivity that the violence of the 1940s and 1950s was structural more than cultural and contingent rather than innate to the Colombian people; thus, they sought to contribute optimistically to peace.

But people as people read it, some found science on their side, and others found science against them. Politics intervened, as it does, science making partisanship deeper, so that and these men and their text were dragged down into daily hatreds, ruthlessly savaged by their contemporaries. A creole book designed during the creole peace to further that peace

was one of the living moments that led tragically to its unraveling. Our three authors did much to demonstrate that the black legend is more myth than reality, and their fellow Colombians did much to show that they have good reason to believe in the myth instead.

Karl's work is intellectual history at its best, a soft telling of the intricate moment-to-moment interplay between ideas and daily life, between daily life and ideas. His creole telling is facilitated by the abiding faith that Colombians have in the power of words. Perhaps it is too strong a belief, for in Colombia—as in so many other countries—the words of war are more ready to the mouth than the words of peace. This is not a story of an elusive peace, but of a forgotten one. Colombians made the creole peace, that huge accomplishment at the center of Robert Karl's unexpected book, a peace that they quickly forgot they had accomplished.

As he draws his narrative to a close, Robert Karl states that the creole peace shows us that the past is possible again. That Colombians have forgotten it makes the search for that past now more difficult.

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## MODERN ART

*American Interventions and Modern Art in South America.* By Olga U. Herrera. Gainesville: University of Florida, 2017. Pp. 320. 57 color plates. \$79.95 cloth. doi:10.1017/tam.2018.78

Olga Herrera meticulously chronicles how modern art became “a strategic instrument of national security” (1) through the establishment of the Art Section of the Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs (CI-AA; later known as the Office for Inter-American Affairs) in 1941. Comprising six chapters, each corresponding to different activities sponsored by the CI-AA, Herrera's book maps out the many interconnections and relationships motivating the circulation of modern art and design from the United States in Latin America and vice versa.

Herrera expertly charts the historical details that drove the United States to implement art initiatives as a strategy of national security and cultural defense. Determined to supplant Latin America's cultural dependence on Europe, the United States actively deployed modern art during the World War II era as a means to disseminate ideas of freedom and democracy, all the while asserting its dominance in the hemisphere. One example of such deployment was the CI-AA sponsored exhibition Contemporary North American Painting, which circulated throughout South America in 1941. Showcasing the work of 112 US artists, the exhibit relied on the infrastructure of the Museum of