

DOSSIER CAIANA #29

Call for submissions

Arts and Industries: Experimentation, Processes, and Material Realities of Making (16th–20th centuries)



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The arts and industries are often thought of as separate spheres, yet they have been closely intertwined since the beginnings of Modernity, both because of the historical links that transformed labor relations and through the technical changes that unfolded over time. Artistic production depends on technical knowledge, requires specific production times, and is embedded in industrial infrastructures or economies of collective work. It also relies on materials whose manipulation shapes both the aesthetic result and the hierarchical structures that sustain this practice.

This dossier proposes to review these connections from multiple scales and contexts, with an emphasis on processes that developed between the sixteenth and twentieth centuries across Europe and the Americas. It seeks to bring together studies addressing the intersections of art and industry through their processes, materials and modes of experimentation, attending to the ways in which these dynamics manifest in diverse historical, geographic and productive contexts.

The relations between art and industry have taken distinct forms in different regions, where craft traditions, material knowledge and systems of production developed according to local histories. The role of organized, skilled and repetitive production can be identified in craft practices in pre-Columbian cultures, where technical expertise, symbolic systems and collective labor converge in ways that challenge later distinctions between art, craft and industry. In the European context, from the sixteenth century onwards, authors such as Giorgio Vasari and Gian Pietro Bellori began to distinguish intellectual design (*disegno*) from manual labor. This approach contrasts with contemporary treatises on the arts, such as Cipriano Piccolpasso's *Li tre libri dell'arte del vasaio* (1557) and Antonio Neri's *L'arte vetraria* (1614), where intellectual conception and manual labor remain closely integrated. By the eighteenth century, the consolidation of academies, together with the early mechanization of workshops, reinforced a sharper division between the liberal arts and technical crafts, even as both realms continued to depend on shared procedures of replication and material knowledge. Following Glenn Adamson's interpretation, the very notion of "craft" emerges and is consolidated in the eighteenth century as a conceptual counterpart to the forms of production associated with the Industrial Revolution. Accordingly, both "industry" and "craft" are treated here as historically contingent categories whose meanings have been interpreted in different ways over time.

Rather than assuming a unidirectional flow from Europe to Latin America, this dossier adopts a transatlantic perspective that considers the circulation, translation, and transformation of techniques, materials, and models of production. This perspective encompasses both European and Latin American cases, including major and minor industrial centers, artisanal centers, and regionally situated modes of production and exchange; thereby challenging dominant narratives of modernity and artistic canon formation. It examines the working conditions within specific types of production and the material realities involved, from the sourcing of raw materials to ensuring the durability of the finished work. By investigating these narratives, the dossier aims to highlight the non-linear, experimentation-driven paths of artmaking. These frameworks are examined alongside Latin American artistic practices and local industries, not as derivatives but as sites of parallel, intersecting, and sometimes conflicting developments.

Relationships between Latin American artistic practices and their local industries have been inscribed in national, educational, and economic projects that sought to consolidate local production in response to imported models. In this sense, the inquiry on art and industry is also a reflection on aesthetic and material sovereignty. In addition, this dossier also

foregrounds artisanal and industrial practices as autonomous aesthetic pursuits, whose value cannot be reduced solely to their role within broader narratives of nation-building or economic policy. Taken together, these approaches allow us to rethink how discourses on craftsmanship, decoration, and industry were constructed. It also encourages us to examine how these discourses were translated or transformed in different contexts, marked by different objectives, economies, and policies. Papers focusing on Europe or Latin America independently are equally welcome.

We invite contributions that explore these intersections from multiple perspectives – historical, material, economic, ecological, or gender-related– paying attention to the ways in which experimentation and material constraints transform our understanding of artistic and industrial practices. In doing so, we propose several lines of analysis that highlight topics related to the object-based, productive, and processual dimensions of the arts, as well as the role of the practitioners within those dynamics of making.

1. The role of experiment in emerging and established industries: how error, testing, or unfinished works can produce knowledge and innovation, for example through defective materials, technical improvisation, or adaptive reuse of tools and processes.
2. Questions related to efficiency, durability, and quality: production times with artisanal processes versus mass production, work rhythms and obsolescence.
3. Tensions between locally grounded forms of production and imported goods manufactured in industrialized centers: their implications for aesthetic sovereignty, national identity, and modes of resistance to external trends. This also involves the relationships between industry and natural heritage; the use of local materials, pigments, woods, types of clay, among others that generate environmental impacts and affect sustainability.
4. Links between economic expectations (return on investment, financing, institutional support), support networks for artists, together with aesthetic considerations: how artistic autonomy and market demands are negotiated, including cases in which aesthetic inquiry itself becomes the primary driver of production.
5. Division of labor, recognition, visibility, access to resources, differentiated trajectories, together with gender roles in artistic industries, particularly in artisanal workshops and family-based systems of production.
6. Beyond industry: the role of education, exhibitions, and public outreach activities to promote the incorporation of new professionals, ensure recognition and the funding or continuity of specific projects.

Suggested readings

Adamson, Glenn. *The Invention of Craft*. London: Bloomsbury, 2013.

Castillo Espinoza, Eduardo. *Artesanos, artistas, artífices. La escuela de artes aplicadas de la Universidad de Chile 1928-1968*. Santiago, Ocho libros, 2010.

Cordero Reiman, Karen. “Intervenciones suaves: tejido de punto, bordado y textiles como retos al canon histórico-artístico y social.” *H-ART. Revista de historia, teoría y crítica de arte* no. 6 (2020): 16–22. <https://doi.org/10.25025/hart06.2020.02>.

Frank, Isabelle, ed. *The Theory of Decorative Art: An Anthology of European and American Writings, 1750–1940*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000.

Fox, Celina. *The Arts of Industry in the Age of Enlightenment*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2009.

- Gombrich, Ernst. *The Sense of Order: a study in the psychology of decorative art*. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, [1979] 1984.
- Malta, Marize. *O olhar decorativo: Ambientes domésticos em fins do século XIX no Rio de Janeiro*. Rio de Janeiro: Mauad X, FAPERJ, 2011.
- Mantovani, Larisa. *El pueblo tiene derecho a la belleza: Artes aplicadas, educación e industria en Buenos Aires (1910–1940)*. Buenos Aires: Miño y Dávila, 2023.
- O'Malley, Michelle. *The Business of Art: Contracts and the Commissioning Process in Renaissance*. Italy, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005.
- Palumbo Dória, Renato. *Entre o belo e o útil: Manuais e práticas do ensino do desenho no Brasil*. Campinas, SP: Editora da Unicamp, 2021.
- Piccolpasso, Cipriano. *The Three Books of the Potter's Art*. 2 vols. Edited by Ronald Lightbown and Alan Caiger-Smith. London: Scolar Press, 1980.
- Sarnecka, Zuzanna, and Agnieszka Dziki, eds. *The Materiality of Terracotta Sculpture in Early Modern Europe*. London and New York: Routledge, 2023.
- Sennett, Richard. *El artesano*. Barcelona: Anagrama, 2009.
- Smith, Pamela. *The Body of the artisan: art and experience in the scientific revolution*, Chicago: The Chicago University Press, 2004.
- Snodin, Michael, and Maurice Howard. *Ornament: A Social History Since 1450*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996.

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