



H-ART. Revista de historia, teoría y crítica de arte

ISSN: 2539-2263

ISSN: 2590-9126

revistahart@uniandes.edu.co

Universidad de Los Andes

Colombia

Jiménez, Maya

A Cosmopolitan Ambition: La Regeneración and the French Academic Nude in 19th-Century Colombia

H-ART. Revista de historia, teoría y crítica de arte, no. 7, 2020, July-November, pp. 159-176

Universidad de Los Andes

Colombia

Available in: <https://www.redalyc.org/articulo.oa?id=607764906008>

- How to cite
- Complete issue
- More information about this article
- Journal's webpage in redalyc.org

UNAM  redalyc.org

Scientific Information System Redalyc

Network of Scientific Journals from Latin America and the Caribbean, Spain and Portugal

Project academic non-profit, developed under the open access initiative

A COSMOPOLITAN AMBITION: *LA REGENERACIÓN* AND THE FRENCH ACADEMIC NUDE IN 19TH-CENTURY COLOMBIA

Una ambición cosmopolita: La Regeneración y el desnudo académico Francés en Colombia durante el siglo XIX

Uma ambição cosmopolita: A Regeneração e o nu da Academia Francesa na Colômbia do século XIX

Reception date: January 7, 2020. Acceptance date: May 13, 2020. Modification date: May 17, 2020
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.25025/hart07.2020.09>

MAYA JIMÉNEZ

Adjunct Assistant Professor of Art History, Pace University, New York, United States. Ph.D. in Art History at the Graduate Center, CUNY, New York, NY. Recent publication: "The Myth of the *Baiana* in Nineteenth Century Portrait Photography," in *Visual Typologies from the Early Modern to the Contemporary*, eds. Tara Zanardi and Lynda Klich (Routledge, 2018).

mayaajime@gmail.com

An earlier version of this paper was presented at CAA in February of 2019, in a panel led by professor Ray Hernandez-Duran.

Cómo citar:

Jiménez, Maya. "A Cosmopolitan Ambition: *La Regeneración* and the French Academic Nude in 19th-Century Colombia". *H-ART. Revista de historia, teoría y crítica de arte*, nº 7 (2020): 157-174. <https://doi.org/10.25025/hart07.2020.09>

ABSTRACT:

In Colombia, the conservative policies of *La Regeneración*, as championed by Rafael Nuñez, ushered in a new era of political and religious conservatism that paradoxically ran counter to the cosmopolitan ambitions of this new Republic. Against the backdrop of these nationbuilding and institution-building efforts, the Escuela de Bellas Artes reflected the cosmopolitanism of *La Regeneración*, through its leadership of internationally trained artists. As Director of the Escuela de Bellas Artes, Epifanio Garay introduced the practice of the live nude model in 1894, and the representation of the female nude in painting in 1899. Through a case study of Garay, a protégé of Nuñez, I argue how the inclusion of the female nude not only established the legitimacy and professionalism of the Escuela de Bellas Artes, and with it the cosmopolitanism of *La Regeneración*, but also exposed the contradictory role of the female nude as both an academic instrument, which Colombian artists like Garay learned in Paris, and a force of change in the way in which it exposed the limits of religious conservatism and social morality, thus transforming the "academic" nude into the embodiment of cultural tensions in a country, like Colombia, in the midst of transition.

KEYWORDS:

Female nude, The Regeneration, academic art, live model, religion.

RESUMEN:

En Colombia, las políticas conservadoras de *La Regeneración*, defendidas por Rafael Núñez, marcaron el comienzo de una nueva era de conservadurismo político y religioso que paradójicamente iba en contra de las ambiciones cosmopolitas de esta nueva República. Con estos esfuerzos de construcción de naciones e instituciones como telón de fondo, la Escuela de Bellas Artes reflejó, a través de su liderazgo de artistas formados internacionalmente, el cosmopolitismo de *La Regeneración*. Como director de la Escuela de Bellas Artes, Epifanio Garay introdujo la práctica del desnudo en vivo en 1894 y la representación del desnudo femenino en la pintura en 1899. A través de un estudio de caso de Garay, un protegido de Núñez, este texto argumenta cómo la inclusión del desnudo femenino no sólo estableció la legitimidad y el profesionalismo de la Escuela de Bellas Artes, y con ello el cosmopolitismo de *La Regeneración*, sino que también expuso el papel contradictorio del desnudo femenino como instrumento académico que artistas colombianos como Garay aprendieron en París y una fuerza de cambio en la forma en que expuso los límites del conservadurismo religioso y la moral social. Transformando así el desnudo “académico” en la encarnación de las tensiones culturales de un país en plena transición, como lo era Colombia.

PALABRAS CLAVE:

Desnudo femenino, *La Regeneración*, arte académico, modelo vivo, religión.

RESUMO:

Na Colômbia, as políticas conservadoras da *Regeneración*, promulgadas pelo Rafael Núñez, caracterizaram o início de uma nova era de conservadurismo político e religioso que, paradoxalmente, ia contra as ambições cosmopolitas da nova república. Com o cenário dobre da construção de identidades nacionais e de instituições republicanas, a Escuela de Bellas Artes tentou refletir o cosmopolitismo, desde a *Regeneración*, e com artistas nacionais formados fora do país. Como diretor da Escuela, Epifanio Garay introduziu a prática do modelo nu ao vivo em 1894 e a representação do nu feminino em 1899. Por meio do estudo do caso de Garay, que era mesmo um protegido de Núñez, este texto analisa a forma na qual o nu feminino estabeleceu a legitimidade e o profissionalismo da Escuela de Bellas Artes e, a través dela, o cosmopolitismo da *Regeneración*. Na mesma linha, estuda como a Escuela expôs o papel contraditório do nu feminino como um instrumento académico (que os artistas colombianos como Garay aprenderam em Paris) que serviu mesmo como meio para revelar os limites do conservadurismo religioso e a moral social. Assim, o nu “académico” voltou a encarnação das tensões culturais de uma Colômbia em transição à modernidade.

PALAVRAS CHAVE:

nu feminino, *Regeneración* (regeneração), arte académica, modelo ao vivo, religião.

In Colombia, the year 1886 marked both the establishment of a Republic and that of its first art school. It was no coincidence then that both a new government and its official art academy were founded in the same year. Prior to 1886 Colombia had undergone a series of reincarnations in name, territory, and constitution: it had been Gran Colombia (1819), then the Republic of Nueva Granada (1831), and finally the United States of Colombia (1863). The central tenets of this new republic had been articulated two years prior when Rafael Núñez (1824-1894) had first won the presidency, thus initiating *La Regeneración* (The Regeneration) under the banner of “Regeneration or catastrophe.” The Republic of Colombia effectively dissolved the Liberalism of Tomás Cipriano de Mosquera, including the 1863 Constitution of Rio Negro, which had established limited presidential power and anti-clerical states, and recognized the right to bear arms. Additionally, Núñez rekindled Colombia’s relationship with the Roman Catholic Church through *El Concordato de 1887* (The 1887 Concordat), resulting in a wave of conservatism that ushered in suppression and censorship resulting in the outbreak of the civil war known as the Thousand Days War in 1899.¹

In establishing the Republic of Colombia and his political movement, *La Regeneración*, Núñez’s goal was to position Colombia on an international stage by projecting a sense of cosmopolitanism that simultaneously, and somewhat ironically, embraced the conservative values and moral order of the 1887 Concordat. By definition, a “cosmopolitan” individual is “a citizen of the cosmos,” yet for Núñez the concept of a world culture was defined in relation to Europe (and to France in particular), and understood in terms of how the periphery—in this case, Colombia—positioned itself with respect to the center.² Networks of exchange, established from as early as the colonial period, determined a clearly uneven set of power relations between Latin America and Europe, and thereby reflected the complex relationships between the two world regions, as seen through the liberation of Gran Colombia under the leadership of the *criollo* liberator Simón Bolívar. After independence contact between the two continents gradually increased, and brought with it the emergence of new travelers, that of Latin American artists in Paris who, much like Núñez, were perceived as “marginal cosmopolitans” in their efforts towards global citizenship.³

The cosmopolitanism of *La Regeneración* is best reflected in its nationalist rebranding, economic boom, and institutionalization campaign, as well as in Núñez’s desire that Colombia should rival, if not be on a par with the rest of the “world.” Written by Miguel Antonio Caro, the Constitution of 1886 declared all former states “departments” which would now have to report to a centralized government, and in so doing eliminated any sense of regional identity in favor of

1. Helen Delpar, “Road to Revolution: The Liberal Party of Colombia, 1886-1899.” *The Americas* 32, n.º 3 (1976): 348-371, 352.

2. For an explanation of how French culture came to define the European continent during the 19th century, see Frédéric Martínez, *El nacionalismo cosmopolita: la referencia europea en la construcción nacional en Colombia, 1845-1900* (Bogotá: Banco de la República, 2001).

3. The term “marginal cosmopolitans” is used by Natalia Majluf to describe Peruvian artists in Paris, who “became aware of the vertical nature of their relationship to European centers, of unequal development, and of their peripheral position in the international community. Natalia Majluf, “*Ce n’est pas le Pérou*,” or Failure of Authenticity: Marginal Cosmopolitans at the Paris Universal Exhibition of 1855.” *Critical Inquiry* 23, n.º 4 (1997), 869.

a unified nationalist agenda. Rather than structuring a political understanding of Colombia based on its regional and cultural diversity, a result of its diverse topography,⁴ Núñez attempted to essentialize the very meaning of what it meant to be Colombian, and defined it as a collective experience based on a shared political agenda and an integrated economy.

However, the distances between these departments and the lack of proper roadways prevented this integration, perhaps with one notable exception: the coffee boom, which peaked in the mid-1890s.⁵ The peak did not last long, as tariffs, inflation, and currency devaluation resulted in its demise and the outbreak of the Thousand Days War, polarizing the country and pitting liberals, who represented the coffee-plantation and business owners, against conservatives. Núñez was unsuccessful in his efforts to control the issuing of paper money, otherwise provided by private financial institutions, and to standardize currency into paper money, and this kind of mismatch between the ambitious projects of *La Regeneración* and its achievements would be characteristic of the period.⁶

The 1886 Constitution also called for an institutional overhaul that strengthened the National Army and expanded the education system, including the Universidad Nacional de Colombia (National University of Colombia), which grew from four schools (or departments) to nine, among them the Escuela Nacional de Bellas Artes (National School of Fine Arts). Since the constitution also proclaimed Catholicism to be the country's official religion, it also made its teaching mandatory in public institutions like the Universidad Nacional, facilitated and authorized the construction of religious institutions, and gave priests the power to censor schools.⁷ In addition to this, the 1887 Concordat went even further by declaring the Church immune to civil power.

It is in this context of intense nationalism, prosperity, institutionalization, and religiosity that the Escuela Nacional de Bellas Artes flourished, which explains why the academic yet controversial practice of painting from the female nude was met with both anticipation and uproar. The aim of this paper is to position the nationalism of the Republic of Colombia and the academicism of its first art school as complementary and codependent occurrences by arguing that the nation- and institution-building efforts of *La Regeneración* were parallel goals, both of which reflected a premature desire for internationalism amidst provincial ideologies and infrastructures. Taking the academic nude as the vehicle through which these tensions came into view, this paper hopes to reposition and indeed expand our understanding of the nude as a purely "academic" instrument, and to redefine it instead, beyond its pedagogical significance within the European tradition, as the embodiment of cultural tensions in a country that was in the midst of transition.

4. Colombia's topography ranges from Andean heights to Amazonian jungles and includes two oceanic coastlines, Atlantic and Pacific.

5. In 1895 and 1896 coffee accounted for almost 70% of exports. Charles Bergquist, *Coffee and Conflict in Colombia, 1886-1910* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1986), 23.

6. Colombia's first paper money was printed during *La Regeneración*, and the measure initially caused inflation and currency devaluation. This, topped with an export tax on coffee in 1895, led to an economic crisis. David Bushnell, *The Making of a Modern Colombia: A Nation in Spite of Itself* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 149.

7. According to Ray Hernández-Durán, in Mexico City the Academy of San Carlos likewise fell under the control of religious conservatives, which explains why "religious painting retained a central role in academic art production through the end of the nineteenth century." Ray Hernández-Durán, "Modern Museum Practice in Nineteenth Century Mexico." *Nineteenth Century Art Worldwide* 9, n.º 1 (2010): n.p.

THE ESCUELA NACIONAL DE BELLAS ARTES IN BOGOTÁ

In 1886 art instruction was formalized in Colombia with the establishment of the Escuela Nacional de Bellas Artes, which that same year organized the country's first fine arts exhibition and sought to set the standards governing these exhibitions and teaching in general. The school not only marked the earliest effort to consolidate a transformation from artisan to artist, but also the inception of what critic and curator Eduardo Serrano has termed the idea of “‘contemporary art’ in the country.”⁸ The exhibitions organized by the school also transformed literary writers, journalists, and even artists into art critics, thus heralding the beginning of the disciplines of art criticism and art history in Colombia.

Many of the Escuela's early instructors and directors were trained abroad, arguably as a result of its decision to promote a cosmopolitan artistic tradition. During *La Regeneración*, between 1886 and 1899, the government funded a large number of artists to travel to Paris for training.⁹ Among these artists were Francisco A. Cano, Pedro Carlos Manrique, Salvador Moreno, and Epifanio Garay (Img. 1). The cultural policies of this era privileged internationally trained artists and, as mentioned above, this sense of cosmopolitanism was predominantly linked to French literary, philosophical, and visual culture, as a reflection of what historian Frédéric Martínez has called the “syndrome of ‘French Europe.’”¹⁰ This was the case not only in Colombia but throughout Latin America, as seen in the example of Peruvian Francisco Laso and his French “cosmopolitanism,”¹¹ and in the artistic careers of Argentinean painters Eduardo Sívori and Eduardo Schiaffino.¹²

Among these Paris-trained travelers-turned-instructors, Epifanio Garay offers an interesting perspective through which to understand the classicizing, yet paradoxically modern practice of painting from life, and the way in which it fit into the larger nation-building efforts of *La Regeneración*.

EPIFANIO GARAY AND RAFAEL NÚÑEZ

Epifanio Garay lived a cultured and privileged life. Through the study of classical voice in New York City and of painting in Bogotá (first under the tutelage of José Manuel Groot and later under Mexican painter Felipe Santiago Gutierrez) Garay developed parallel careers in the musical and visual arts. However, Gutierrez's mentorship would prove to be a turning point in his career, to the extent that it culminated in his earning a scholarship to study abroad in Paris in 1881. Gutierrez's influence on Garay can be seen not only in his decision to study in Paris, as Gutierrez himself had done earlier, but in his commitment to the

8. Eduardo Serrano, *Cien años de arte colombiano 1886-1986* (Bogotá: Museo de Arte Moderno, 1985), 17.

9. From 1845 to 1900 an estimated 580 Colombians traveled to Europe; approximately 50 of them did so around 1880. Martínez (El nacionalismo cosmopolita, 202) compiled this database of Colombian travelers to Europe based on correspondence, periodicals, diplomatic and consular listings, and catalogues of international exhibitions.

10. Martínez, *El nacionalismo cosmopolita*, 234.

11. Majluf, 868-893.

12. See Laura Malosetti Acosta, *Los primeros modernos: arte y sociedad en Buenos Aires a finales del siglo XIX* (Ciudad de México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2001).



Image 1. Epifanio Garay, *Caricature by Garay*, 1884, ink on paper, 5 × 6.3 in. (12.5 × 16 cm.), Museo Nacional de Colombia, Bogotá.

professionalization of art teaching after his return, evidenced in the leadership roles Garay occupied at art schools in both Bogotá and Cartagena.¹³ A neoclassical yet *costumbrista* painter, Gutierrez combined high-brow academism with the “local color” of particular regions, customs, and types, forging what Mey-Yen Moriuchi has described as an “alliance between artistic culture and nationalistic discourse,”¹⁴ which Garay emulated.

Garay’s peripatetic life also paralleled that of Gutierrez, in that he moved from Panama to Colombia, then to New York, and finally to Paris, where he enrolled at the Académie Julian from 1882 to 1884, and exhibited at the Salon of 1886.¹⁵ Upon his return to Colombia in 1885 Garay settled in Cartagena, the native city of then-President Rafael Núñez. Here, he painted his first portrait of Núñez (Img. 2), who had served as President first in 1880, and then in 1884. In this monumental, life-size portrait Garay captures Núñez in a contemplative

13. Before joining the faculty at the Escuela de Bellas Artes in Bogotá Garay had established and directed the Escuela de Bellas Artes in Cartagena in 1891.

14. Mey-Yen Moriuchi, *Mexican Costumbrismo: Race, Society, and Identity in Nineteenth-Century Art* (University Park: Penn State University Press, 2018), 96.

15. In the Archives of the Académie Julian at the Archives Nationales in Paris, Garay is mentioned as an artist from Bogotá, Colombia, living at 3 Boulevard St. Michel, and enrolled at the Académie Julian from 1882 to 1884, under Adolphe Bouguereau at 31 rue du Dragon.



Image 2. Epifanio Garay, *Portrait of Rafael Núñez*, 1891, oil on canvas, 103.5 × 80 in. (263 × 203 cm.), Museo Nacional de Colombia, Bogotá.

pose, absorbed in deep thought and surrounded by books in his study. The work is similar in composition and style to the portraits that had come to define the iconography of European and US political leaders like French Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte (Jacques-Louis David, *The Emperor Napoleon in His Study at the Tuileries*, 1812) (Img. 3) and US President George Washington (Gilbert Stuart, *George Washington (The Landsdowne Portrait)*, 1796).

Although he painted the portrait at Núñez's estate of El Cabrero in Cartagena, a coastal city with hot and humid weather, Garay depicts Núñez wearing a dark suit and coat, and surrounded by rich red velvet drapery, an attire and décor that would have been more commonly associated with the high-altitude city of Bogotá. The desk against which Núñez leans his right elbow in the painting, still preserved today at his estate, had been imported from France, further removing the image from its actual location. In rejecting any sense of regionalism, as neither attire nor furniture bear any relation to the city of Cartagena, Garay's painting reflects the standards of academic art, as seen in the example of David, including the seamless brushwork and even lighting, the depiction of political leaders as intellectuals, and the classicizing aesthetics of the decorative arts. The fact that Garay's painting was produced beyond these chronological



Image 3. Jacques-Louis David, *The Emperor Napoleon in his Study at the Tuileries*, 1812, oil on canvas, 203.9 × 125.1 cm (National Gallery of Art).

and geographical barriers is proof of the potential of academic painting to communicate universal values through a shared cosmopolitan language.

The portrait of Núñez serves as an indicator of the visual culture that flourished during *La Regeneración* and of the demand for portraiture in this style. This is evidenced most clearly in Garay's professional success as a portraitist,¹⁶ recording fashionable socialites and political icons like President Manuel A. Sanclemente, whom he depicted, much like Núñez, seated at his desk before a red curtain. Garay also painted genre scenes and biblical narratives, most famously *La mujer del levita de los Montes de Efraín* (*The Levite's Wife from the Ephraim Mountains*, 1899) (Img. 4), the first nude in Colombian painting.

In 1893, Garay joined the faculty of the Escuela Nacional de Bellas Artes in Bogotá, where he served on and off as Professor and Director until the school was shut down due to the Thousand Days War of 1899. In 1903 Garay passed away, before the end of the war and the reopening of the academy. Given the

16. For a description of Garay's career as a portraitist and academician, see Beatriz González Aranda, "La academia llega por diversos caminos," in *Manual de arte del siglo XIX en Colombia* (Bogotá: Universidad de los Andes, 2013), 302-309.



Image 4. Epifanio Garay, *Woman of the Levite from the Ephraim Mountains*, 1899, oil on canvas, 54.7 × 78.1 in. (139 × 198.5 cm.), Museo Nacional de Colombia, Bogotá.

17. Esperanza Garrido, Raúl Arturo Díaz Sánchez, Alfonso Sánchez Arceche and Héctor Serrano Barquín, *Felipe Santiago Gutiérrez: pasión y destino* (Toluca: Instituto Mexiquense de Cultura, 1993), 106.

artistic pedigree that he had acquired under the tutelage of Gutierrez and in Paris, and his experience as a painter working in the academic style and as a painter of portraits, Garay seemed an obvious choice to lead the school. Nonetheless, he would come to challenge the Catholic dogma of Núñez's 1887 Concordat and test the limits of Colombian artistic culture. How far was the government of *La Regeneración* willing to establish cosmopolitan artistic taste at the expense of challenging religion and morality?

PAINTING THE "ACADEMIC" NUDE

Even before arriving at the Académie Julian, Garay had been exposed to the female nude in painting through the work of Gutierrez, whose scandalous nude *La cazadora de los Andes* (*The Huntress of the Andes*, 1874) (Img. 5) was the first nude in Mexican painting, although it had been exhibited in Bogotá, not in Mexico City.¹⁷ Recalling academic nudes like Alexandre Cabanel's *La naissance de Venus* (*The Birth of Venus*, 1863) (Img. 6) and others by William-Adolphe Bouguereau, Gutierrez depicted an idealized, statuesque, and mythological



Image 5. Felipe Santiago Gutiérrez, *The Huntress of the Andes*, 1874, oil on canvas, 38.5 x 60.6 in. (98 x 154 cm.), Museo Nacional de Arte, Mexico City.



Image 6. Alexander Cabanel, *The Birth of Venus*, 1863, Musée d'Orsay, Paris.

nude in the guise of Diana, the goddess of the hunt, alongside her bows and animal pelt, and very much in keeping with the classicizing style of European and US painting, including John Vanderlyn's *Ariadne Asleep on the Island of Naxos* (1809-1814), the first nude painting in the US. Interestingly, Gutierrez chose to place this figure from Roman mythology against the backdrop of an Andean landscape, although this location is referenced only by the title.

As Gutierrez's protégé, Garay naturally enrolled in Bougureau's atelier at the Académie Julian, further reinforcing the tradition of the academic nude. Other Colombian artists, like Pedro Carlos Manrique, who was also enrolled there from 1882 to 1886, mentioned the study of "the nude and of composition, guided by eminent masters," as one of the big attractions of this studio.¹⁸ Colombian artist Francisco Antonio Cano, who was enrolled there from 1898 to 1899, visually documented this tradition both in his travel notebook and in his painting *Modelo de la Academia Julian* (*Model of the Académie Julian*, 1898) (Img. 7).¹⁹ The study from live models, together with the inexpensive fees, convenient locations, and lack of an entrance examination, made the Académie Julian a destination for artists from Colombia and other Latin American countries, and from the US, and elsewhere, several of whom were women.²⁰

18. Pedro Carlos Manrique, "El premio del Salón de Paris." *Revista Ilustrada*, August 22, 1899, 333-4.

19. The Archives of the Académie Julian indicate that Cano was enrolled there from July 11, 1898 to January 11, 1899, and again from January 30 to February 6, 1899.

20. For a list of female and US artists enrolled at the Académie Julian, see Gabriel Weisberg and Jane R. Becker, *Overcoming all Obstacles: the Women of the Académie Julian* (New York: Dahesh Museum, 1999), and Kathleen Adler, *Americans in Paris, 1860-1900* (Washington, DC: National Gallery, 2006).

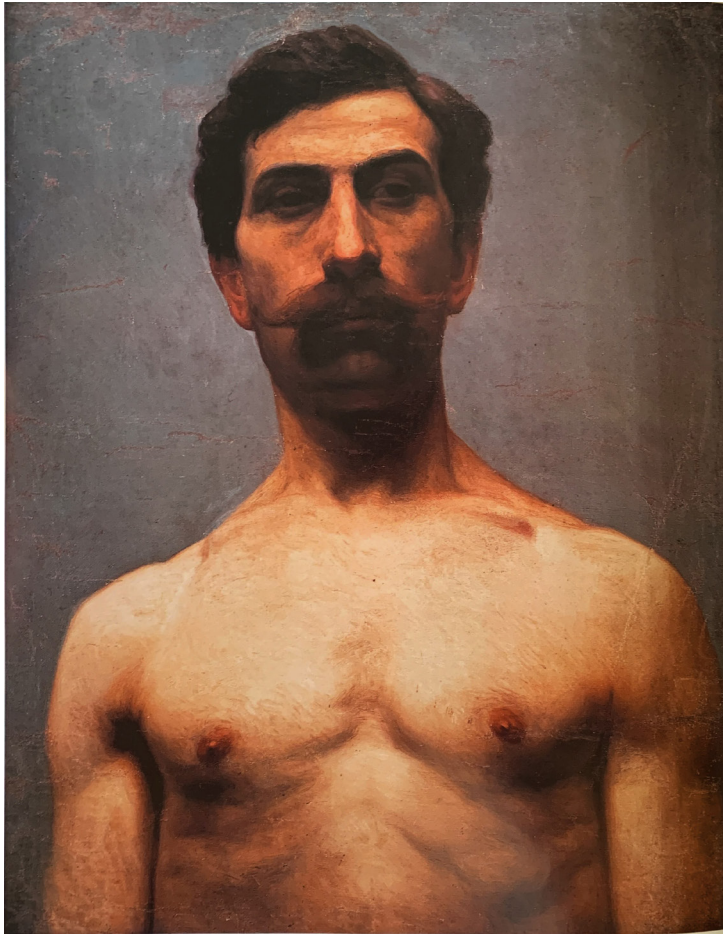


Image 7. Francisco A. Cano. *Model of the Académie Julian* 1898, oil on canvas 61 × 51 cm. Colección de Arte, Banco de la República, Colombia.

Garay painted and exhibited *La mujer del levita* in 1899, fourteen years after his return from Paris and towards the end of his tenure at the Escuela Nacional de Bellas Artes. A biblical painting, similar in style and subject matter to Gutierrez's, Garay treaded carefully in his depiction of the female nude. In spite of the religious context, the issue of nudity created such controversy that the canvas was exhibited separately from other works of art and, as noted in a local newspaper, the public was discouraged from entering and warned about the painting's immorality.²¹

In addition to these warnings and inconvenient placement in a separate room, *La mujer del levita* also called attention to itself because of the manner in which the female nude was represented. Described as stiff, cold, awkward, and literally dead, Garay's approach to the woman's body struck viewers in more than one way. Colombian art critic Jacinto Albarracín described the depicted figure as a cadaver recalling the smell "of bodies in decomposition."²² By deviating from the idealized nude practiced by Gutierrez and Bouguereau, and choosing to

21. "Notas sobre la exposición," *El Heraldo*, September 5, 1899, n.p.

22. Jacinto Albarracín, *Exposición Nacional de Bellas Artes de 1899: los artistas y sus críticos* (Bogotá: Imprenta de Medardo Rivas, 1899), 5.

depict an obscure Old Testament narrative about an unfaithful woman who was raped and abused by thieves before being returned to her husband's doorstep, Garay further incited controversy.

The fact that critics objected not just to the obvious nudity, but to the lack of idealization in the figure, evidenced in its lifelessness and stressed by the macabre narrative, reveals the extent to which the question of morality in art was not a binary concept, but rather a fluid and relative one, by which a painting like Garay's could be regarded as intolerable while Gutierrez's *Cazadora de los Andes* may have garnered some acceptance. By calling attention to her lifelessness Albarracín deprived the female nude of her "universality," and in so doing transformed her into a "real" woman, associated not with art, but with reality.²³ In questioning her aesthetics (appearance) and legitimacy (narrative), critics redefined her not as a "nude,"²⁴ meaning a woman who is disinterested in her nakedness and "clothed in art,"²⁵ but rather, and more problematically, as a "naked woman."

Moreover, there was a rumor that the nude had been based on a photograph. This accusation was first made by the critic Max Grillo, who on October 4, 1899, wrote in *El Autonomista*:

I avoided, for example, writing down the many defects found in [Garay's] canvas, [...] and in order to spare myself the shame of proclaiming that it was taken from a photograph (which I have held in my hands) I prefer not to mention this painting. [...] Telling a painter that he copied a nude from a photograph is like proving to a poet that he plagiarized a poem word for word. Laziness is never an excuse in works of art.²⁶

While the woman's nudity in the painting challenged social propriety and religious morality, Grillo's accusation both hinted at the use of pornography and questioned the artist's professionalism. A common practice among French artists like Gustave Courbet and US artists like Thomas Eakins, nude photographs, whether academic or pornographic, were often regarded as a tool of the trade.²⁷ Unable to verify Grillo's claim, one can only speculate, although it is worth noting that the mere insinuation of pornography would on its own have been scandalous.

Grillo's accusation also touched on another important value of *La Regeneración*, professionalism. Indeed, the core of his critique is that Garay should have painted from a live model, rather than from a photograph, not only because an artist can better capture the realism of the human body when drawing from the flesh, but also because it would have reflected international artistic standards, through which he would have exemplified Colombia's "cosmopolitanism."²⁸ The fact that the response to Garay's painting hinged on the question

23. Lynda Nead, *The Female Nude: Art, Obscenity and Sexuality* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), 14.

24. See Kenneth Clark, *The Nude: A Study in Ideal Form* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980).

25. T.J. Clark, "The Nude in Modernity and Postmodernity," in *Modern Art: A Critical Introduction*, edited by Pam Meecham and Julie Sheldon (Abingdon: Routledge, 2005), 114.

26. Max Grillo, "Por la crítica," *El Autonomista*, October 4, 1899, n.p.

27. See Amy Beth Werbel, *Thomas Eakins: Art, Medicine, and Sexuality in Nineteenth-Century Philadelphia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007).

28. Majluf, 870.

of the nudity or nakedness of the figure begs further discussion. A point worth noting in this regard is that Garay's figure lacked pubic hair, following what T. J. Clark describes as an "(academic) artistic convention that distinguished nakedness from nudity."²⁹ This further validates the point made by Garay, but missed by critics entirely, that his painting was an academic, rather than a pornographic nude, and that indeed it was a nude and not a naked woman.

While the cosmopolitanism, or "cultural sameness" of Garay's presidential portraits had not caused a stir, the female nude in *La mujer del levita* clearly complicated matters and touched on a sensitive moral nerve in Colombia. Knowing Núñez personally, Garay surely anticipated the extent to which the presence of a female nude would challenge religious conventions and artistic sensibilities, and in fact he painted no other nudes before or after this canvas. Nonetheless, he may have expected the biblical framework to assuage the critics, in which case his assumption was proven wrong: as this one painting proved, subject matter was not the only determining factor.

Three days after Grillo's accusations were published, and in the same newspaper, Garay published a response in defense of his reputation, referring to the cosmopolitan practice of the academic nude and his own internationalism,³⁰ which he substantiated by citing his successful exhibitions in Paris at the Académie Julian and the Salon of 1886, where he had exhibited a painting titled *Recreación* (*Recreation*) (Img. 8).³¹ In fact, the success of Garay's painting in Paris had been the source of great pride in Bogotá, where it was discussed in serial publications like Alberto Urdaneta's *Papel Periódico Ilustrado* and Cano's *Lectura y Arte*.³² At the time, one critic had noted that the woman's cleavage in *Recreación* was "not provocative," and argued that, since the woman was not in the nude, her modesty could be applauded as "a natural consequence of the frankness of her joy and the purity of her heart."³³ Words like "modesty" and "purity" were common in the artistic discourse of *La Regeneración*, demonstrating the extent to which tensions between nudity and nakedness, academic art and pornography, were fluid and relative, but above all, timely.

PAINTING FROM A LIVE MODEL

Prior to exhibiting *La mujer del levita* Garay had already experienced the scorn of *La Regeneración* when he had introduced the practice of live modeling to the Escuela Nacional de Bellas Artes in Bogotá. Since the 1886 Constitution increased the influence of government and religion over education, Garay, then Director, was subject to censorship by the President of the Universidad Nacional, Liberio Zerda. In a letter dated April 4, 1894 (Img. 9), Zerda warned Garay of the controversial nature of the practice of drawing from a live model:

29. Clark, "The Nude in Modernity," 114.

30. Epifanio Garay, "Contra-crítica," *El Autonomista*, October 7, 1899, n.p.

31. Pierre Sánchez, *Les catalogues des Salons XIV (1884-1886)* (Dijon: L'Echelle de Jacob, 2007), 82.

32. *Papel Periódico Ilustrado* and *Lectura y Arte* were both founded by Parisian-trained Colombian artists, which explains why they naturally championed the work of Colombian artists and especially of those who studied abroad.

33. "El Cuadro de D. Epifanio Garay," *Papel Periódico Ilustrado* 5, n.º 100 (1886): 64.

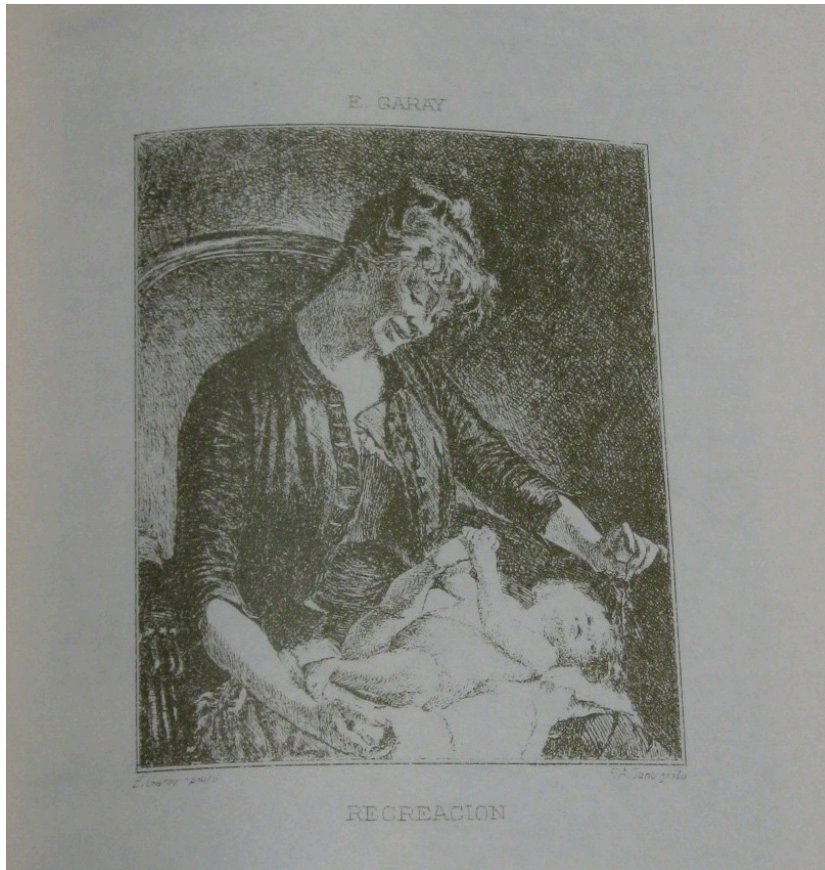


Image 8. Reproduction of Garay's *Recreation*, 1886 in *Lectura y Arte*, 1903, Vol. 1, n.º 4 & 5, La Biblioteca Luis Ángel Arango Library, Bogotá.

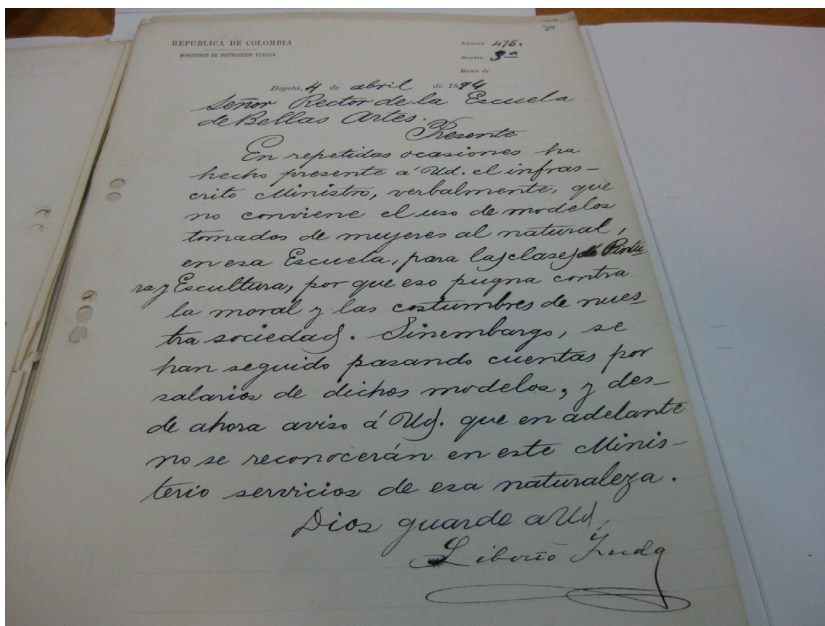


Image 9. Letter from Liberio Zerda to Epifanio Garay, April 4th 1896, Archives of the Escuela de Bellas Artes, Universidad Nacional de Colombia, Bogotá.

On numerous occasions I have warned you [...] verbally that the use of models taken from women in the flesh is prohibited in this school, and for the classes in Painting and Sculpture, as this practice goes against the morals and customs of our society. Nevertheless, the bills for these models have continued to be submitted, and from this moment on I advise you that this Ministry will not recognize services of that nature.³⁴

This statement touches upon the “immorality” and “unlawfulness” of using and paying for live models, and responds to Garay’s insistence on upholding that practice, which he regarded as integral to the development of any art school or national artistic tradition.³⁵ Other administrators and critics reacted similarly, including again Albarracín, who described it as “scandalous in the puritanical society of the capital city.”³⁶ The nature, tone, and language of these criticisms of nude painting as a genre and of the practice of drawing from the nude demonstrate the extent to which religion exerted a considerable influence on artistic production during *La Regeneración*, and particularly the way in which religious conservatism yielded provincial ideologies.

The nude model, once a reflection of the cosmopolitanism that Núñez had desired for the Republic of Colombia and its first art academy, took on a very different meaning once it was put into practice, and Colombian administrators, critics, and writers quickly and loudly proclaimed their disapproval. This discrepancy between idea and practice signaled the extent to which “the ‘moral question’ prevailed more in Colombia than in other nations,” as historian Hayley Froyland put it, “principally because of the unique and continued strength of the Catholic Church and its strong alliance with the Conservative Party as well as the concomitant intensity of the belief in hierarchy and the perception of society as a social organism.”³⁷ Thus the 1887 Concordat, together with the conservative policies of *La Regeneración*, created not only a provincial and hermetic mentality that quickly erased all traces of cosmopolitanism, but also led to deep ruptures in the political landscape.

In permeating all levels of society including social, moral, political, and artistic, the subject of religion not only made the exhibition of the female nude and the practice of live modeling a serious moral affront, but forever altered the development of the Escuela Nacional de Bellas Artes, which for the remainder of the 19th century and during the early decades of the 20th century would remain a bastion of conservative academic painting, delaying, deterring, and in many ways stunting the growth of modern art in Colombia.

34. Liberio Zerda, Bogotá, to the Director of the Escuela de Bellas Artes, Bogotá, April 4, 1894. Transcript in the hand of Liberio Zerda, Archives of the Escuela de Bellas Artes, Universidad Nacional de Colombia, Bogotá.

35. See Susan Waller, *The Invention of the Model: Artists and Models in Paris 1830-1870* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2006).

36. Albarracín, *Exposición Nacional de Bellas Artes de 1899*, 5-6.

37. Hayley Froyland, “The *Regeneración de la Raza* in Colombia,” in *Nationalism in the New World*, edited by Don H. Hoyle and Marco Antonio Pamplona (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2006), 165.



BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Adler, Kathleen. *Americans in Paris, 1860-1900* (Washington, DC: National Gallery, 2006).
- Albarracín, Jacinto. *Exposición Nacional de Bellas Artes de 1899: los artistas y sus críticos*. Bogotá: Imprenta de Medardo Rivas, 1899.
- Bergquist, Charles. *Coffee and Conflict in Colombia, 1886-1910*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1986.
- Bushnell, David. *The Making of a Modern Colombia: A Nation in Spite of Itself*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993.
- Clark, Kenneth. *The Nude: A Study in Ideal Form*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980.
- Clark, T.J. "The Nude in Modernity and Postmodernity." In *Modern Art: A Critical Introduction*, edited by Pam Meecham and Julie Sheldon. Abingdon: Routledge, 2005.
- Delpar, Helen. "Road to Revolution: The Liberal Party of Colombia, 1886-1899." In *The Americas* 32, n.º 3 (1976): 348-371.
- Froysland, Hayley. "The Regeneración de la Raza in Colombia." In *Nationalism in the New World*, edited by Don H. Hoyle and Marco Antonio Pamplona. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2006.
- Garay, Epifanio. "Contra-crítica," *El Autonomista*, October 7, 1899.
- Garrido, Esperanza, Raúl Arturo Díaz Sánchez, Alfonso Sánchez Arteché and Héctor Serrano Barquín. *Felipe Santiago Gutiérrez: pasión y destino*. Toluca: Instituto Mexiquense de Cultura, 1993.
- González Aranda, Beatriz. *Manual de arte del siglo XIX en Colombia*. Bogotá: Universidad de los Andes, 2013.
- Grillo, Max. "Por la crítica," *El Autonomista*, October 4, 1899.
- Hernández-Durán, Ray. "Modern Museum Practice in Nineteenth Century Mexico." In *Nineteenth Century Art Worldwide* 9, n.º 1 (2010).
- Majluf, Natalia "'Ce n'est pas le Pérou,' or Failure of Authenticity: Marginal Cosmopolitans at the Paris Universal Exhibition of 1855." In *Critical Inquiry* 23, n.º 4 (1997): 868-893.
- Malosetti Acosta, Laura. *Los primeros modernos: arte y sociedad en Buenos Aires a finales del siglo XIX*. Ciudad de México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2001.
- Manrique, Pedro Carlos. "El premio del Salón de París." *Revista Ilustrada*, August 22, 1899, 333-4.

- Martínez, Frédéric. *El nacionalismo cosmopolita: la referencia europea en la construcción nacional en Colombia, 1845-1900*. Bogotá: Banco de la República, 2001.
- Moriuchi, Mey-Yen. *Mexican Costumbrismo: Race, Society, and Identity in Nineteenth-Century Art*. University Park: Penn State University Press, 2018.
- Nead, Lynda. *The Female Nude: Art, Obscenity and Sexuality*. London and New York: Routledge, 1992.
- Serrano, Eduardo. *Cien años de arte colombiano 1886-1986*. Bogotá: Museo de Arte Moderno, 1985.
- Waller, Susan. *The Invention of the Model: Artists and Models in Paris 1830-1870*. Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2006.
- Weisberg, Gabriel and Jane R. Becker, *Overcoming all Obstacles: The Women of the Académie Julian*. New York: Dahesh Museum, 1999.
- Werbel, Amy Beth. *Thomas Eakins: Art, Medicine, and Sexuality in Nineteenth-Century Philadelphia*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007.