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LEISURE AND AGRARIAN REFORM: LIBERAL
GOVERNANCE IN THE TRAVELING MUSEUMS
OF SPANISH MISIONES PEDAGÓGICAS
(1931–1933)

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ABSTRACT This article examines the program of bringing itinerant art museums to the rural areas implemented by the Misiones Pedagógicas of Spain's Second Republic. My analysis seeks to answer the following questions: a) Why did the government support these initiatives while peasants were using violence to contest its agrarian reform? b) How did museums fit into the Republic's program of public education? And 3) how did they treat the peasants' own culture? Tracing the philosophical foundations of the Museo del Pueblo in Manuel Bartolomé de Cossío's (1857–1935) theory of leisure, I discuss Cossío's indebtedness to late-Victorian uses of art education for the poor and to *krausista* philosophy. I argue that the Museo del Pueblo's and the Misiones' emphasis on raising the spirit of citizenship by reorganizing peasants' free time constituted an experiment in liberal governance that responded to the urgent political need to implement a democratic policy for ruling the masses.

In May 1931, the provisional government of Spain's Second Republic created the Patronato de Misiones Pedagógicas with the purpose of promoting

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general education in the rural regions. Reporting to the Ministry of Public Instruction and Fine Arts, the Patronato financed the work of young middle-class men and women from the cities volunteering to bring to villages libraries, cinemas, theaters, and puppet shows and to organize lectures and workshops. Two moving art exhibitions that received the names of “itinerant museums,” “traveling museums,” or, officially, the Museo del Pueblo were incorporated into the program in October and December of 1932. As with the Misiones themselves, they were conceived by Manuel Bartolomé de Cossío (1857–1935), prominent art critic and educator who presided over the Patronato.

The Misiones Pedagógicas were designed to bring to Spain’s rural zones the agenda of educational reform promoted since the end of the nineteenth century by the *institucionistas*: faculty and alumnae of the Institución Libre de Enseñanza (Paucker 234–39; Otero Urtaza, *Las Misiones Pedagógicas* 73–79). This private school, opened in Madrid thanks to the efforts of Cossío’s teacher Francisco Giner de los Ríos (1839–1915), had coordinated the transformations of secondary and higher education since 1876, while the National Pedagogical Museum, founded in 1882 and directed by Cossío, had acted as the headquarters for the reform of elementary education. The *institucionista* reformers had been particularly successful with a new generation of Spain’s urban elites comprising the Republic’s first (“reformist”) governments of 1931–1933, for which Cossío remained the highest authority until his death in September of 1935. This is why the period between 1931 and the end of 1933 brought to reality his most far-reaching ideas on education, which he had drafted in the nineteenth century. Educational reform in the rural areas was one of them.

Given Cossío’s influence among the first post-monarchical governments, it is important to remember that he viewed the Republic as a realization of two nineteenth-century intellectual programs: 1) trade unionism and socialism, and 2) educational reform. In June 1931 Cossío was reported to have summarized his vision in the following words: “La España actual —dice— es obra de Pablo Iglesias y de D. Francisco [Giner]. No lo olvide. Educación desde la escuela. Disciplina y educación en las masas” (Llopis). When Rodolfo Llopis, Minister of Primary Education, reminded him about the importance of agrarian reform—at the time the subject of the Provisional Government’s legislative efforts (Malefakis 165–68)—Cossío did not fail to acknowledge Joaquín Costa’s (1846–1911) *regeneracionismo* but insisted that

these ideas also belonged to Giner: “¡Claro! ¡Lo de Costa! Allí, en esa misma mesa —añadió— escribí yo, hace años, el programa de Costa. Lo escribí yo. Me lo dictaba D. Francisco. Lo defendía Costa” (Llopis; punctuation in the original). Thus in Cossío’s view, agrarian reform, which historians consider the stumbling block of the Republic’s policy and the hidden cause of the Civil War, was subsumed under a nineteenth-century program of disciplining and educating the masses.

The educational policy of the Second Republic has recently received attention from cultural historians who have argued that the Misiones constituted a new phase in the development of civil society, since for the first time in the nation’s history, peasants were addressed as citizens (Holguín; Otero Urtaza, *Las Misiones Pedagógicas* 65–72). Moreover, the Misiones not only brought modern technology into the villages, but also allowed urbanites to familiarize themselves with the peasantry through continuous photographic coverage (Mendelson 93–100). These studies shed important light on the reform’s political implications in the framework of the Republic’s agenda of social peace and cohesion.

Yet a number of questions have yet to be addressed. Why did the government support these time-consuming and costly initiatives at a time when peasants were using violence to contest its agrarian policy? How did such diverse elements as rural libraries, puppet shows, museums, and cartoons fit together in this program and how did the program treat the peasants’ own culture? I seek to answer these questions by focusing on one under-researched concept underpinning the program: Cossío’s theory of leisure as contemplative enjoyment enabling people to think rationally. As I will argue, only the broad agenda of reorganizing peasants’ free time along these lines can explain the civic benefits that the government was planning to obtain by funding the Misiones Pedagógicas.

Existing studies suggest that although turn-of-the-century reformers and Cossío himself were well aware of the specificities of rural schooling,¹ they never gave much importance to peasant skills and instead argued for expanding to the rural areas the primary tasks of education: “acción social; difusión

1. Cossío’s archive in the Institución Libre de Enseñanza features clippings from regional periodicals about the reforms of rural schools and a book by Luciano Seoane Seoane (1876–1955) dedicated to Cossío, drafting precisely this type of program for rural education. The last, so-called “Pedagogical–Social,” Mission, which operated in 1934 in Sanabria (Zamora), did transmit practical knowledge such as the use of inorganic fertilizers.

de los resultados; higiene; misión moralizadora; refinamiento estético, etc.” (Cossío, “Este es un libro de paz”; qtd. in Paucker 234). The Misiones, therefore, were not designed to impart specifically rural information, which was considered “la labor práctica que corresponde a los organismos de la Administración pública” (*Memoria del Patronato* 6). And although the films that they showed occasionally covered such subjects as “wool-producing stock” or “arboriculture” (xvii, 11, 45), the missionaries—i.e., those people carrying out the work of the Misiones—were mainly charged with disseminating in the rural zones “ways of enjoyment” previously reserved to the cities (5).

In what follows I will explain why peasant leisure was more prominent than literacy in the agenda of the Misiones Pedagógicas. I propose to approach this question with the tools developed by Foucauldian “studies of governmentality” that view culture as a soft vehicle of administration empowering individuals to improve themselves.² As I will argue, the Misiones’ emphasis on inspiring a spirit of citizenship by organizing peasants’ free time can be interpreted as an experiment in liberal governance that responded to the urgent political need to implement, in a short period of time, a democratic policy for ruling the masses.

The only liberal model available at that time in Spain was grounded in the philosophy of social change via individual self-improvement through culture that included not only literacy but also monitored leisure, developed by the *institucionistas* in the second part of the nineteenth century. The *institucionistas* believed that the acquisition of knowledge was only a small part of what they called “true education”: a way of “making people” by communicating to them a broadly defined set of values comprising daily behavior, the habit of direct observation, and a knack for philosophical abstraction (Boyd 31–40). In their view, these were best developed through such activities as playing team sports, analyzing works of art, and contemplating landscape. The *institucionistas*’ sources were twofold. In the first place, there was the British doctrine of “rational entertainment” as a tool of governance for the urban

2. Michel Foucault developed the notion of “soft” modes of governance, by which the State encourages individuals to act upon themselves, in his 1977–1978 lectures on “government rationalities” at the College de France (published in English, together with a 1977 interview and a number of studies exploring the concept’s implications for different fields of social sciences, in *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*). The impact of museum-going on producing self-governing subjects is thoroughly analyzed by Tony Bennett (especially *The Birth of the Museum*, “Acting on the Social,” and “Culture and Governmentality”).

working classes; in the second, there was the *krausista* notion of “harmonious” development of the individual’s rational thinking through direct observation. Cossío’s design of the Misiones Pedagógicas combined both perspectives into one practical program of channeling peasants’ free time into a set of monitored activities that included motor action (games, dances, singing, drawing, excursions), contemplation (either direct or mediated through art and film), and conversations with the missionaries. The Museo del Pueblo, as Cossío conceived of it, was the centerpiece of this agenda, as it delivered to peasants both the practice of observation and the very notion of a disinterested contemplative leisure free from pragmatic, commercial, or religious connotations. And while I am not the first scholar to focus on the Misiones’ “culture of happiness” (see García-Velasco), my analysis will uncover the connection between such ideas and the Republic’s program of agrarian reform. The first section of the article connects the debates on peasant leisure with recent research on the Republic’s agrarian policy. The second section traces the origins of Cossío’s theory of leisure in late-Victorian and *krausista* traditions. The third section explains why Cossío privileged the museums and how he treated folk art, and the final section analyzes the Museo del Pueblo as a staged experience that promoted social cohesion by modifying Spain’s artistic canon.

Agrarian Reform and the Importance of Peasant Leisure

What aspects of the Republic’s agrarian policy can explain the activities of the Misiones Pedagógicas? Recent research has greatly facilitated this type of inquiry by making evident that agrarian reform was comprised of discrete measures concerning land ownership, forms of cultivation, territorial and administrative reorganization, and the conditions of rural labor (González Calleja; Maurice; Riesgo). Although most government policies in these areas had failed by September 1933, it should be remembered that these same policies determined the agenda of the Misiones. Firstly, the government did not support simple redistribution of land and refused to transfer tenure to individual peasants. Only lands that were “not properly cultivated” were subject to expropriation; however, they passed to the State, which would then let them out to peasant collectives. Since the question of peasant land tenure was not on its agenda, the government applied union tactics to reorganize rural labor, inviting peasants to negotiate their compensation and working

conditions directly with contractors. To oversee and enforce the new regulations, the government created administrative entities called *jurados mixtos agrarios*. These measures gave more power to local administration, especially the mayors, who became mediators on all issues relating to labor and cultivation. The most important and controversial part of the regulations came from the decree obligating the contractors to employ workers locally (known as the *Decreto* or *Ley de Términos Municipales*), designed to protect the peasants' wages and discourage migration to the cities.

The social processes implied by these early policies are relevant for understanding the importance of leisure in the agenda of the Misiones Pedagógicas. First and foremost, the law of "municipal limits" converted unemployment or seasonal underemployment into a matter of local politics. Second, equating the labor of the peasantry with that of the urban proletariat enabled Cossío and other authorities to fashion peasant education and leisure according to the models tested in the cities. Finally, by converting mayors into labor mediators, the reforms were also transforming municipal governments into the guarantors of peasants' wellbeing. This is why the Patronato proposed to dispatch Misiones at the request of local authorities (*Memoria del Patronato* 9).

The lack of agricultural work generated plenty of free time, and peasants' strikes and protests made it clear that this program could not be postponed. In December 1931, as the first Misión Pedagógica was leaving for the province of Segovia, violent clashes followed an anarchist CNT-led peasant strike in Castilblanco (Badajoz). And although the Misiones emphasized civic education over political partisanship, the Patronato's emissaries were encountering more—and better organized—resistance from the peasants supporting the anarchist parties CNT and FAI than from those influenced by local caciques and clergy. Thus, while the reports of the Patronato tended to gloss over political differences, echoes of local protests can be distinguished in the accounts of the Misiones operating in Navalcán (Toledo) in late January to early February of 1932, in Navas de Madroño (Cáceres) in late March to early April of 1932, in La Cuesta (Segovia) in December of 1932, and in Zaldueño (Álava) in late February to early March of 1933. In the first case, the missionaries were challenged by members of local sections of CNT and FAI; in the second, they had to overcome local anticlerical sentiments aroused when they mentioned the Catholic Kings, recited a *romance* poem about Virgin Mary, or tried to play recordings of Gregorian chants; and in the third and fourth they were confronted with the peasants' questioning of the Republic's

agrarian policy and their belief that “se iba contra ellos” (*Memoria del Patronato* 16, 36, 37, 47–48, 49–50).

The coverage of the Misiones in the Spanish press demonstrates that Marcelino Domingo and Fernando de los Ríos, the Republic’s first two Ministers of Public Instruction and Fine Arts, who at other times occupied the posts of Minister of Agriculture (Domingo) and Minister of Justice and State (de los Ríos), viewed the program as a vehicle for preventing violence. On his way to the Misión in Navalcán in February 1932, de los Ríos referred explicitly to peasant protests: “¿En qué siglo está viviendo este pueblo? Cuando estos pueblos se sublevan, matan e incendian, también es un levantamiento de aldeanos de siglos remotos, medievales. ¡Y dicen que es comunismo!” (“La magna empresa”). Journalists also echoed these views. In April 1932, on the first anniversary of the Republic, Teodoro Muñoz Greco humorously begged from the pages of *El Sol* for a prompt arrival of itinerant puppet shows: “¡Pronto esas misiones, esos ‘títeres’, don Fernando [de los Ríos]!” Clearly referring to the recent unrest, Muñoz Greco called on the Misiones to ensure that “nunca el tricornio de la Guardia civil sea la proyección de una tragedia que empieza en un tiroteo ciego y acaba en un presidio” (7). These examples suggest that both the government and the public entrusted to the Misiones the task of mitigating the conflicts that derived from the policies concerning the land and the peasantry.

In the meantime, growing unemployment in the cities created the need to confine peasants to the areas surrounding their villages (Maurice 241, Garrido González 141–42). And while the “decree of municipal limits” was still being debated, the authorities anticipated that by offering to peasants certain privileges existing in the cities, it would be possible to dissuade the agricultural population from seeking a better life. The decree of August 7, 1931 articulated the task of “alegrar, humanizar y civilizar el campo, evitando que se despueble en ese anhelo angustioso de buscar en la ciudad todo lo que el campo no ha tenido hasta hoy” (*Memoria del Patronato* 158). Among those things that one could only see in the city were art museums, which the Patronato was to introduce to peasants with the aim of making them participants of “el goce y las emociones estéticas” (*Memoria del Patronato* 155).

But why did transmitting “pleasure and esthetic emotions” require a museum? Why couldn’t the missionaries simply explain paintings instead of going through the pains of improvising art galleries in the villages where, in some cases, there was no electricity or even a room big enough to fit the canvases? While the subsequent sections will address the importance of



Figure 1. “The installations of the Museo del Pueblo in a school in Cebreros, Ávila, November 1932.” Madrid, Residencia de estudiantes, MIS/I/206. Reprinted with permission.

museums for Cossío’s theory of leisure, one also has to think about the political message that the Museo del Pueblo communicated. Its photographs and descriptions leave us with a glimpse of a public place that was clean and decorated with flowers (Fig. 1). White curtains were hung to separate large rooms into galleries of sorts, which were lighted at night by an electric generator (“Una excelente labor cultural”). As if this were not enough, the most advanced audiovisual technology was used to complete the effect:

Hay que colgar los cuadros, hay que vestir los muros de la sala con cortinas de arpillera, para que aquellos luzcan sobre fondo neutro.

El Museo lleva como accesorios: un gramófono con altavoz, colección de discos, aparatos de proyecciones y cine.

Con la música se logra hacer más atractiva la exposición, si bien los cuadros bastan para que muchos visitantes se hallen a gusto en una sala decorada con sencilla nobleza (a veces alegrada con plantas y cacharros), permanezcan allí largo tiempo y aun sin poner atención grande en cada cuadro, reciban su influjo en una suma de impresiones y lleguen a sentirlos como ambiente. (*Memoria del Patronato* 106–07)



Figure 2. “Rally in Turégano, Segovia, at the Museum’s inauguration.” Published in *Memoria del Patronato* 1934. Madrid, *Residencia de estudiantes*, *Memoria*/I/039. Reprinted with permission.

Since the building able to host a museum had to be large enough, the itinerant collections were usually displayed in city halls and schools.

At that time the government was busily reorganizing local administration, and it could be argued that the museums created an opportunity for peasants to rethink their attitude towards municipal powers. This is probably why politics and culture are so intimately intertwined in official photographs that show local inhabitants gathering to visit a museum. One such picture reproduced in the 1934 *Memoria del Patronato* (117) featured columns of marchers carrying banners of the Republic, a scene that could easily be taken for a popular demonstration (Fig. 2). Another snapshot from the village of Pedraza featured a missionary (José Val del Omar) and a uniformed guard displaying El Greco’s *Resurrección* from the balcony of the City Hall to the visitors gathered below (Fig. 3). Thus the representations of the itinerant museums provided some of the most emblematic images documenting the Republic’s intervention in the rural regions.



Figure 3. "Showing the paintings of the Ambulant Museum from a balcony of the City Hall, Pedraza, Segovia." Published in Luis Santullano, *Residencia*, Feb. 1933. Madrid, *Residencia de estudiantes*, Ediciones/010. Reprinted with permission.

Educational Reform and the Doctrines of Organized Leisure

The importance of museums for the Misiones' program derived from Cossío's views on leisure, especially his notion that the contemplation of art was socially relevant because it transformed people into rational philosophers. These ideas incorporated the principles of "rational recreation" developed by British Victorian moralists and social reformers and adapted them to the *krausista* theory of human rationality. In Britain, "rational recreationists" made themselves known by founding Working Men's Clubs, the "new athleticism" movement, and music halls (Bailey) and promoting museum-going among the working classes (Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum; Museums and Citizenship* 5–6). In Spain, team sports and organized excursions were pioneered in the 1880s by the Institución Libre de Enseñanza, the Escuela Internacional, and other innovative schools. Antonio Jiménez-Landi credits the "import" of British-type sports and games to Stuart Henbest Capper, who joined the Institución in 1882 as an English professor and later became a member of its governing board (278; see also López Serra; and Otero Urtaza,

“*Primeras expediciones*” 51). According to Eugenio Otero Urtaza, thanks to Capper’s and Emilia Gayangos’s connections, Giner and Cossío were introduced to the most prominent reformers of British education during their stay in London in 1884 as delegates to the International Conference on Education (“*Primeras expediciones*” 50–53).

British “rational recreationists” considered lower-class entertainment to be vital for social cohesion. They did not pretend to forge group identities or class consciousness; instead, they proposed to model lower-class behavior on bourgeois norms of respect for individual space and control over bodily appetites. Respecting one’s space was viewed as a step towards improving hygiene; dominating one’s body would lead to moral self-improvement and eventually to social harmony. But by the 1880s, when Spanish educators joined the movement, British reformists were no longer dealing directly with workers, who were already educating themselves through Workers’ Clubs that resisted middle- and high-class patronage (Bailey 116–32). Rather, they brought the “rational recreationists’” experiments to schools in an effort to shape the working-class children’s leisure and visual experiences (Weiner 19–26). In 1915 Cossío recalled that he had discovered the importance of games for ethical education during his stay in England in 1884 (Otero Urtaza, “*Primeras expediciones*” 52). Since the 1880s, in the publications and activities channeled through the *Institución* and the *Museo Pedagógico*, organized leisure was treated as a matter of highest priority.

Educational museums for children were the most important development in the late-Victorian reformist agenda. Since drawing was already recognized as a crucial trade skill, British educators were determined to introduce the children of the poor to the fundamentals of aesthetics. Following the lead of John Ruskin, whose ideas had inspired the Art for Schools Association in 1883 and the Manchester Art Museum Committee in 1877–1886, permanent or itinerant school exhibits were created in lower-class neighborhoods of industrialized cities such as Sheffield, Birmingham, Aberdeen, and Glasgow and quickly gained popularity beyond England. The decoration of school interiors also became a subject of interest for educators, who began transforming classrooms into museums of sorts, with reproductions of paintings hanging from the walls and objects related to the curricula put on display. Some schools even established their own museums; others received actual paintings or sculptures on loan. Following the British example, in many European countries the Pedagogical Museums amassed collections of books,

objects, or art reproductions that could be lent out to schools, and began organizing lectures, seminars, and excursions for teachers.

But the nineteenth-century tradition of aesthetic education initiated in England was only geared towards the children of the urban poor. Thus, although Ruskin envisioned differentiated curricula for workers', peasants', and even fishermen's children, he only planned to teach aesthetics to future urban workers and craftsmen (127–28). The reasons for this selective approach could be found in the late-Victorian view of nature, which Ruskin and his followers considered to be the primary repository of beauty. This is why working-class children, thought to have no exposure to natural beauty, were introduced to art as a substitute able to mitigate this deficiency.

Educational reform in Spain quickly aligned itself with these new pedagogical currents. For example, during his stay in Dresden in 1882, Cossío was already observing school playgrounds and gymnasiums (Otero Urtaza, "Primeras expediciones" 49). Educational museums and museum tours were a later addition directly deriving from the Art for Schools movement with which Cossío became acquainted in 1884. Reviewing the experience in a series of articles published in the *Boletín de la Institución Libre de Enseñanza*,³ Cossío cited Ruskin's ideas and even translated some of the Manchester Committee's pamphlets. He also referenced British educational exhibits and inventoried their displays. Cossío's program of aesthetic education for the smallest children testified to the reform's full compliance with the most advanced European and American standards.

Yet the differences between Cossío's views and those of his foreign colleagues are as important as their similarities. As implied in his 1885 article "La enseñanza del arte," his program did not distinguish between town and country, nor between social groups in general: "En ningún pueblo, por pequeño que sea, falta iglesia, y en ella esculturas y pinturas; y mil objetos insignificantes, en todas las casas, pueden hacer comprender a los niños lo que es el arte bello" (350). Cossío's apparent failure to pay due attention to the pupils' social differences seems to have derived from the general view of education as the progress of observational skills that he inherited from Giner. Unlike British reformers who argued that one could only understand beauty by contemplating nature, Giner's circle considered that an understanding of

3. See, for example, Cossío's articles "La enseñanza del arte," "Sobre la educación estética," and "Más sobre la educación estética en Inglaterra."

art was the necessary precondition for grasping the perfection of nature. The doctrine was rooted in the ideas of German pantheist philosopher Karl Christian Friedrich Krause and was propagated in Spain by Giner's teacher Julián Sanz del Río (1814–1869) (López Morillas). Spanish *krausistas* did not treat art as a temporary substitute for nature but rather considered it a preparation for understanding God's "ideal for humanity" (Krause and Sanz del Río). In Cossío's own words, "cuando somos capaces de ver la naturaleza con los ojos impregnados con toda la belleza de la tradición artística, entonces sí, la naturaleza llega a ser lo supremo. Para llegar a ver a Dios en la naturaleza es precisa una larga serie de ejercicios espirituales" (conversation with disciples, qtd. in Xirau 77). And since for Cossío no social group or class in Spain was at the time receiving the kind of education that would allow them to "desenvolver armónica y racionalmente las facultades humanas," his pedagogy was inclusive (Cossío, "La enseñanza del arte" 349).

A view of art as indispensable preparation for the general understanding of an "ideal" that was as much aesthetic as it was ethical explains why Cossío insisted that the development of artistic sensibility should be the centerpiece of the pedagogical reform: "En realidad, no debe hablarse de 'enseñanza', sino de 'educación' artística. Es preciso procurar la cultura intelectual, a saber: el caudal de conocimientos relativos a las bellas artes; pero al mismo tiempo la cultura estética, el desarrollo del gusto, el sentimiento de lo bello y el entusiasmo para producirlo" (Cossío, "La enseñanza del arte" 348). Seeing how hard it was to implement his program in Spain, in 1887 Cossío revisited his 1884 experience in London. This time he used the authority of Ruskin's circle to support his plan: "Considero el asunto de interés tan vital y de tan honda trascendencia —porque acomete en último término, no un mero programa instructivo, sino toda una esfera de la educación, abandonada, como ninguna otra, hasta el presente, a saber: la de la formación del sentimiento" ("Sobre la educación estética" 322).

Although Cossío's program is undoubtedly subject to social criticism, one could also argue that it avoided aesthetic elitism by downplaying the importance of taste and connoisseurship. It was a far cry from the Enlightenment idea that sensitivity to beauty is an innate quality of a few refined individuals, and even from the Kantian understanding of taste as the trained ability to engage one's faculties in "free play" with beautiful objects. For example, Cossío's handwritten summary of Sanz del Río's lecture about the correlation between the developmental stages of rational thinking and artistic perception suggests that Spanish reformers viewed the ability to interpret art as stratified

by class and education: they distinguished between “el enteramente inculto,” “el hombre de vulgar (sensible) educación,” “el aficionado, el culto, el hombre de gusto (el amador),” “el artista,” and “el filósofo” (“Ejemplo de los tres grados” 1–4; emphasis in the original). Yet in this scheme one’s capacity to appreciate artistic techniques did not signal a better understanding of art; that required an ability to distinguish in each painting the general laws of beauty and to extrapolate them to the entire creation. In this hierarchy, a connoisseur could only boast a stage two understanding (“relative and relative–subjective”) below that of an “artist” or a “philosopher” (Sanz del Río 25–31). In Cossío’s rendering, aficionados shared with generally educated “vulgar” persons an inability to step beyond their own subjectivity: the “vulgar” would only see in art his or her reflection, and the aficionado a reflection of his or her personal taste. On the lowest stage, a “totally uncultured” individual would not be able to recognize a work of art at all: “Es para él la pintura algo al revés de lo que conoce y sabe, en su cerrada, aislada, solitaria individualidad y pensamiento consiguiente, en parte observamos estado análogo al niño” (“Ejemplo de los tres grados” 1; emphasis in the original).

In a sense, Cossío’s program of aesthetic education proposed to train every child as a *krausista* “philosopher” through pedagogically guided leisure. This is why the understanding of art as the primary experience of beauty was to be not just aesthetically “disinterested,” but practically “useless,” “leisurely,” or “entertaining”: “Los cuadros del Museo no sirven más que para verlos y divertirse en ello” (“La enseñanza del arte” 350). Starting from this idea, the Institución, the Pedagogical Museum, and other organizations promoting the reform initiated a full program of museum visits and lectures on art for all available audiences. In reality, though, these initiatives were limited to the inhabitants of the country’s capital and major cities. One had to wait until the Republic’s experiment in liberal governance to see organized leisure and aesthetic education brought to peasants.

The Museo del Pueblo and Folk Culture

Scholars agree that although the activities offered by the promoters of “rational recreation” were only available in the cities, they did not occupy some yawning gap, but rather merged with the cultural forms rooted in rural seasonal celebrations (Cunningham 10, 76–109). How did the Misiones Pedagógicas treat rural culture?

Reading the official reports and the memoirs, one can see that missionaries did not merely propose to make city pleasures available to villagers. In Cossío's words, transcribed by Alejandro Casona, the director of the itinerant theater, the Misiones' function sounded more like "devolver al pueblo lo que es del pueblo" (58–59). Since many of the Republic's authorities and intellectual leaders believed, along with Miguel de Unamuno, that "en España el verdaderamente culto es el no letrado, el analfabeto" (162), the Misiones Pedagógicas did not propose to educate peasants, but rather to attract them to education by reorganizing their own, "spontaneous," leisure activities (*Memoria del Patronato* xiv–xix). The plan implied that peasants had to be introduced to an idea of leisure not marked by holiday seasons, Catholic or pagan. It accomplished this by communicating to villagers the genres and artifacts inspired by rural folklore but reproduced by people and media from the cities. It was expected that the resulting cultural forms would avoid the mistakes of urban workers' entertainment and induce social harmony by improving the behavior and morals of the agricultural proletariat.

In his articulation of the Misiones' program, Cossío acknowledged that its agenda might be seen as frivolous or idle and might therefore be rejected by the very people to whom it was bringing its gifts. Nevertheless, he insisted that it was precisely this "extravagant" task that would allow the missionaries to communicate to peasants what he called "enjoyment" (*goce*):

será milagro que no aparezca como frívolo adorno ineficaz . . . , que no parezca superfluo y jugoso el mínimo esfuerzo justiciero para llevar al pueblo en olvido la vislumbre siquiera del humano, pero privilegiado reino de lo inútil y lo contemplativo, el goce noble de las bellas emociones, la celeste diversión, que la humanidad, por miserable que sea, persigue con afán al par del alimento . . . Pero sea cualquiera el hado que haya de presidir a esa aventura, es lo cierto que en semejantes anhelos . . . se aquilata justamente la esencia. (*Memoria del Patronato* xxiii–xxiv)

For *krausistas*, only such a disinterested pleasure could produce rationally thinking and self-improving people, and this is why Cossío attached high importance to the itinerant museums. As he had explained it in the 1885 program of elementary aesthetic education, the museum was the paramount place of enjoyment, the repository of "cosas bonitas, bellas" free from any utilitarian aim: "que se hacen principalmente para divertirnos, para que nos den placer, para que las gocemos, porque el verlas nos gusta mucho y no

sacamos de verlas más que este gusto” (“La enseñanza del arte” 350). In the inaugural letters read to the villagers on opening days of the Misión and the museum, Cossío repeated almost verbatim this earlier definition: “las cosas que los hombres han hecho sólo para divertirse y divertir a los demás, o sea las cosas que llamamos bonitas, las cosas bellas, las que sirven tan sólo para darnos gusto, para darnos placer y alegrarnos, para divertirnos,” “cosas bonitas,” “cosas bellas” (*Memoria del Patronato* 14, 114). The museums’ ability to serve as a stage for nothing more than leisurely contemplation was therefore presented as a key to the function of the Misiones Pedagógicas. Ramón Gaya, the artist who painted most copies for the itinerant museums and also traveled with them, understood well Cossío’s plan and intended to transmit it to his audience by refusing to answer any questions about the museums’ usefulness: “La gente siempre nos preguntaba: ‘¿Pero eso sirve para algo?’ Yo no quise nunca contestar a esa pregunta porque inutilizaba toda la idea de Cossío. Cossío no quería que sirviera para nada en concreto, sólo quería que existiese, quería regalar eso de una manera desinteresada” (qtd. in Dennis 343).

Another of the museums’ functions consisted of promoting peasants’ awareness about the aesthetic content of their own everyday and holiday activities. When the museums started their journeys, journalists joined the discussion about the usefulness of their program by offering a contradictory set of opinions. On the one hand, the idealized and childlike inhabitants of “pueblecillos pequeños, huérfanos hasta ahora de caricias maternas” were portrayed as grateful museum attendants uttering “palabras de ingenuo asombro, de cándida emoción” (“Las buenas obras de la República”). On the other hand, however, the same peasant audiences were described as dumb and mute victims of their life conditions that constituted a difficult target for an itinerant museum: “¿Qué saben estos hombres de un pueblo perdido en el llano o en la montaña, de teatros y de los Museos?” (“Las buenas obras de la República”). The two positions mirrored two sets of attitudes towards the cultural forms that the Misiones in general and the museums in particular were bringing to the villages. There was, in the first place, the view of rural Spain as a cultural void that the Misiones were to fill. On the other hand, there was a sense that the Misiones simply continued local traditions. For example, Talamanca de Jarama, the missionaries’ destination in June 1932, was described as a place which had kept its monuments, legends, and customs intact for centuries, thereby distinguishing itself from other villages “sin historia, sin gracia y sin arte” (Manrique de Lara). The

articles covering this expedition emphasized a deep connection between the locals and the visitors and didn't fail to photograph the villagers playing a ball game similar to football ("Labor educadora del pueblo"). The positive interpretation of local culture implied that the forms of leisure propagated by the Misiones were re-energizing the artistic genres already known to peasants in some areas and transmitting them to the less lucky others.

In this scheme, the town would provide the technological tools (Mendelson) and the forms of leisure that would allow the spirit of the country to be expressed in its fullness. The technology belonged to the elites, while the content was viewed as coming from peasants. Before and during the Republic, there also existed projects aimed at preserving, collecting, and classifying rural artistic production and then exhibiting it in the cities. Cossío, for one, was a vehement supporter of collecting embroidery; he dedicated several sections of his Pedagogical Museum to this task and authored a prologue to the exhibition held in Madrid in 1913 ("Elogio del arte popular"). Responding to the efforts of the pioneer ethnographer Luis de Hoyos Sainz, the Museum of Regional and Historical Costume was opened in Madrid in 1927, following an exhibition held two years earlier and featuring objects collected by the aristocracy, teachers, and rural clergy (Barañano and Cátedra⁴ 230–32). In 1934, that museum's collection was incorporated into a more ambitious enterprise that received the name of Museo del Pueblo Español (or simply, Museo del Pueblo). In its foundational documents one finds claims that the Republic had an obligation to return to peasants their cultural visibility: "la deuda cultural y política contraída por la República con el Pueblo español que no tiene . . . Museo adecuado que recoja las obras, actividades y datos del saber, del sentir y el actuar de la masa anónima popular, perdurable y sostenedora, a través del tiempo, de la estirpe y tradición nacionales" (qtd. in Barañano and Cátedra 231; see also Mendelson 117). Thus at the time when the itinerant Museo del Pueblo was introducing peasants to the works of Spanish Old Masters, another Museo del Pueblo was being created in Madrid with the purpose of showing to city dwellers the artifacts and traditions created by Spanish peasants. And while the latter proposed to reaffirm the peasants' agency by displaying their artifacts as "folk culture," the former approached the same objective by familiarizing peasants with the culture of the elite.

4. The author wishes to thank Dr. Silvina Schammah Gesser for drawing her attention to this article.

Initially scheduled to take place during local markets and fairs, the Misiones' museums were designed to complement seasonal rituals and merge with fairground entertainment. When he drafted a program for itinerant museums, Cossío explicitly dedicated them to overcoming not only the urban/rural, gender, and generational divides, but also the gap between high and commercial culture. The Museo del Pueblo was dispatched to

las cabezas de partido y villas grandes, donde haya facilidades para instalarlo, pero coincidiendo precisamente con aquellos días de ferias o de fiestas anuales en que los campesinos y lugareños suelen concurrir a la villa, hombres, mujeres y niños, para ofrecerles entonces a éstos, precisamente a los aldeanos, a los que no han visto cuadros y no traspasaron nunca los límites de su Ayuntamiento o de su partido, una enseñanza y un atractivo; pues el Museo, durante el día, y las proyecciones luminosas de otros muchos cuadros, durante la noche . . . deben representar al lado de la procesión, del baile, de los concursos, de los deportes o de los fuegos artificiales, un número más —número gratuito— en el programa de festejos. (*Memoria del Patronato* 109)

Later on, museums were disconnected from rural festivities; their activity was inserted into the general propaganda of leisure as time after work not defined by rural cycles. This vision was actively promoted by the Misiones in their efforts to attract adults occupied by the harvest or attending religious services (*Memoria del Patronato* 45, 46, 51).

But not only were the itinerant museums offering technologically enhanced and socially inclusive alternatives to traditional leisure forms. The merger of urban high and rural cultures that they produced was meant to buttress the resulting hybrid of folk culture against the degrading effects of proletarian entertainment. In an article published in the pedagogical magazine *La Escuela Moderna*, Pedro Llarena compared the museum experience to that of classical music as a remedy against the “vulgar” commercial cultural forms:

se toma el gusto a la buena música, se afina el sentimiento y el oído, o bien, por lo contrario, se aplebeya uno con el ruido infernal del piano de manubrio y el cuplé ligero y pegadizo, se rebaja y vulgariza por el cantar canalla y el ritmo chulo de bailables de cabaret. La música selecta depura y

eleva el ánimo y ahuyenta al pueblo que de ella gusta de groserías e insulseces que la otra incubaba.

Las vistas del Arte pictórico que el Museo de la Misión proporciona concurren a ese fin educativo. (37)

And in fact the notes taken by missionaries indicate that they were looking for signs of improvement in the manners of those agricultural workers who came in contact with the new modalities of leisure. Describing the local inhabitants' behavior during public lectures and film screenings, one missionary noticed their rapidly increasing urbanity: "Muchos espectadores se quitan la gorra cuando se empieza a hablar. Ya saben algunos que no deben fumar. Hay más mujeres y más asientos en la sala. Menos bufandas. Más silencio. Esta rápida adaptación se va acentuando" (*Memoria del Patronato* 35). Another missionary writing from Fuentelolmo de Iscar (Segovia) explained that "canned" gramophone music helped him to "conseguir que los obreros, después de su jornada de trabajo, nos dedicaran algunas horas después de las muchas que acostumbraban a pasar en las cantinas" (*Memoria del Patronato* 51–52). These and other authors shared the conviction that the behavioral changes prepared the terrain for a better mutual understanding between the missionaries and their sometimes unwilling hosts. For example, the first missionary concluded that his audiences finally seemed to be prepared for poetry (35), while the second announced that by the end of the Mission's stay the agrarian proletarians were willing to trade the pub for the itinerant library, at least for a short while (52).

Bringing the Canon to the Village

As we have observed, itinerant museums "humanized" the communication between the government and the rural population by transmitting the idea of pure leisure. But did peasants really see art? Did the Misiones succeed in awakening them to disinterested enjoyment? In the absence of direct testimonies from the visitors, we must seek an answer in the project's philosophical underpinnings and in the interpretations of aesthetic experience and discussions of artistic canon, aesthetic perception, and visual technology that preceded and accompanied the organization of the Museo del Pueblo. The ensuing analysis will address the disparity between the itinerant museums' presumed connection to "folk culture" and their obviously highbrow dis-

plays, arguing that the movable exhibitions offered to peasants works of art in which they could recognize themselves.

The two collections of the itinerant museums included equal numbers of paintings by canonical Spanish artists, ranged by their importance. The selections followed the chronology of the “Spanish School” and incorporated the canon’s latest modifications. For example, they included El Greco, who became recognized as a Spanish (rather than Venetian) artist in the late 1880s thanks to Cossío’s efforts. Jiménez-Landi, the only critic who commented on the Museo’s selection, could find no logic to it (330–34). Moreover, the paintings from the Prado that Cossío hand-picked for rural audiences differed substantially from what he had recommended to young and adult Spaniards visiting the same museum in his earlier publications, “Los cuadros más importantes del Museo del Prado” and “Los alumnos de la escuela de Madrid en el Museo de Pintura.” Although one article was geared towards tourists and the other towards children aged nine to twelve, Cossío’s suggestions for both groups had been as similar to each other as they were different from what was offered to rural visitors to the Museo del Pueblo. For example, while Cossío had always privileged Velázquez, in his tours for urban audiences he did not emphasize his portraits *Las hilanderas* or *Las meninas*, which were the only Velázquez works featured in the Museo del Pueblo. Rather, he cited *La rendición de Breda* as the artist’s paramount achievement (“Los alumnos de la escuela” 23) and only mentioned *Las meninas* and *Las hilanderas* in passing as samples of Velázquez’s mature style (“Los cuadros más importantes” 301). Similarly, in these earlier publications Cossío had suggested that children should see El Greco’s portraits (rather than religious compositions featured by itinerant museums) and Murillo’s *Concepciones* (of which only one appeared in the itinerant museums next to three other of Murillo’s paintings). Finally, from the rich variety of Goya’s paintings at the Prado, Cossío selected for the itinerant museums only the *Fusilamientos de dos de mayo* and *El entierro de la sardina*, while in his tours for urban children he had recommended “*La familia de Carlos IV y los dos bocetos de Episodios del 2 de mayo de 1808*” (“Los alumnos de la escuela” 23). Moreover, while the Museo del Pueblo contained Spanish art, in planning a tour for schoolchildren from Madrid, Cossío had insisted on exposing young visitors to a variety of artistic traditions: “interesa también, más que conocer a Morales, Juan de Juanes o Claudio Coello (y no digamos nada de los restantes), saber que ha habido en el mundo más pintura que la española” (24).

Not following the criteria that he had outlined for urban young and adult

audiences, Cossío's selection for the Museo del Pueblo, however, shared some important characteristics with late-Victorian pedagogical displays that he had described in the 1880s.⁵ They featured works whose subject matter the visitors could immediately recognize. The exhibits of the Art for Schools Association contained reproductions of paintings and drawings showing children or young men and women in the landscape, and Cossío also commissioned copies of works that depicted children or men and women at work or in the landscape. Furthermore, the British educational exhibits gave more importance to the figures represented than to the underlying subject matter, thus mixing educational etchings (like *Nursery Pictures*) and religious paintings and drawings (like Raphael's *Saint Michael* or *Saint Catherine*) with those whose subject matter would be hard to explain to children (like Poussin's *Rebecca at the Well*). Similarly, giving more importance to protagonists than to their stories or social extractions, Cossío selected for his exhibit Velázquez's portraits of *infantes* and *infantas*, little Jesus (Murillo's *Buen Pastor*), Old Testament patriarchs looking like peasants (Ribera's *El sueño de Jacob*), mythological characters at work (Velázquez's *La fragua de Vulcano* and *Las hilanderas*), or stylized national types entertaining themselves (Goya's *El entierro de la sardina*).

While following the late-Victorian principle of offering to uneducated people art that depicted the familiar, Cossío's selection also reflected the notion of "folk," or "popular," culture. The photographs that documented the encounter between Spanish peasants and Spanish art for the urban press emphasized their interdependence. The itinerant museums' best-known photographs were made by José Val del Omar (1904–1982) in the province of Segovia. His captions manipulated the point of view, arranged multiple focal points of light, and carefully chose audiences that matched the subjects of the painting, thus creating a perfect example of "folk culture" presented in the new photographic medium. Middle-aged women appear contemplating a copy of Velázquez's *Las hilanderas*, while a compact group of men is por-

5. Other comparable cultural enterprises, such as the Russian Association of Ambulant Expositions of 1869–1899, the Museums of the Mexican Misiones Pedagógicas, and the Soviet Revolutionary Agit-Trains offered an array of differences. The Russian exhibits did not carry canonical compositions, but rather works by the Association's members. The museums organized by the Misiones Pedagógicas in Mexico, equally rooted in the view of the rural population as the nation's spiritual asset, were dedicated to collecting, classifying, and exhibiting local crafts. On the other hand, the Soviet Agit-Trains did not include any art museum projects, at that time dismissed as elitist.



Figure 4. "Luis Cernuda with a boy in his arms in front of Gaya's copy of *El niño dios pastor*, Cuéllar, Segovia, December 23, 1932." Madrid, Residencia de estudiantes, MIS/I/167. Reprinted with permission.

trayed facing Goya's *Fusilamientos*. Another, undoubtedly humorous, photo features poet Luis Cernuda holding a child in his arms, framed with his back to a copy of Murillo's *El Buen Pastor* (Fig. 4).

In a career that combined filmmaking with innovations in cinematographic equipment, Val del Omar designed a number of machines capable of resolving what he considered to be the central issue in visual media: the continuity between the camera, the image, and the audience. In 1928, the young filmmaker claimed that he had found the solution by capturing the audience's emotional response, which he called "vibration" and attempted to document using three types of images:

- a) Fotografía presentada por el realizador
- b) Fotografía vista directamente por el público
- c) Fotografía a través del personaje (es decir, cuando ya todo el público ha logrado vibrar al unísono). En este caso la pantalla es cóncava. (qtd. in Sáenz de Buruaga 51)



Figure 5. “A group of spectators facing a copy of Goya’s *Fusilamientos del 3 de mayo* in a Museo del Pueblo, circa 1932.” Madrid, *Residencia de estudiantes*, MIS/I/138. Reprinted with permission.



Figure 6. “Women facing the painting of Santa Isabel de Hungría. In the background, Velázquez’s *Las hilanderas*, *Cebreros, Ávila*, circa 1932.” Madrid, *Residencia de estudiantes*, MIS/I/141. Reprinted with permission.

Val del Omar’s photographs of the Museo del Pueblo also examined the emotional connection between the image (in this case, canonical paintings) and the audience through multilayered compositions, some of which presented “images seen directly by the audience” (Fig. 5), while others focused on the audience “vibrating in unison” with the painting (Fig. 6). It was this new meaning of the continuity between Spanish national art and Spanish peasants that Val del Omar’s photographic testimonies represented.

The ways in which the encounter between art and people was designed and staged—including the selection of the paintings—can be traced back to the *institucionista* theory of artistic perception as a reflection of rational development. Examining the missionaries’ reports, one can see that, in their authors’ views, the rural public responded best to the artifacts in which they



Figure 7. "Children in a Museo del Pueblo of the Misiones taking notes from a copy made by Ramón Gaya of Velázquez's *La Infanta Margarita*, circa 1932." Madrid, *Residencia de estudiantes*, MIS/1/208. Reprinted with permission.

could recognize their own heritage (*Memoria del Patronato* 50). If this pattern of responses could be extrapolated to the museum experience, the reactions of peasants happy to recognize themselves in the paintings would correspond to "stage two" in the development of rational thinking, appropriate for people who have received some education. And in fact, the missionaries traveling with the museums designed special activities that would allow their hosts to see themselves and their dwellings as the subject of artistic representation. For example, Gaya alternated guided museum tours with painting landscapes in the village vicinities and displaying them to his hosts. Or, as the photographic representations suggest, when the missionaries explained to children the fundamentals of artwork and drawing, they would ask them to copy paintings depicting children (Fig. 7).

Does this mean that Cossío and the missionaries planned to keep peasants at the second, "rational-subjective," phase of intellectual development proper to "vulgarly educated" people or "connoisseurs"? Some of the criticisms of teaching "El Greco to peasants" that the program received suggested

precisely that (Abril⁶). However, although the missionaries indeed noticed the peasants' natural preference for the familiar, they also insisted on not locking their audiences into their presumed innocence. For example, one of the missionaries underscored that at times their hosts were more eager to discuss the moral or aesthetic qualities of a work than the missionaries themselves:

Bien que los encargados del Museo insistan en señalar su carácter de fácil divulgación artística, los campesinos pasan inevitablemente a consideraciones de orden moral y político, que mezclan con expresiones de homenaje a la destreza del pintor, a la belleza del cuadro y al dramatismo del tema; rara vez —y ello no deja de sorprender— a la belleza natural de las figuras, aun cuando posiblemente sientan tal admiración y la recaten. (*Memoria del Patronato* 107)

The connection between art on the one hand and ethics on the other was the part of the museums' agenda that surpassed "rational–subjective" thinking. Paintings organized in clean and well-lit museum spaces were a mere introduction to a "philosopher's" notion of beauty, typified by Sanz del Río—the beauty that, judging by the description above, peasants could feel but not express. Thus the itinerant museums extended to peasants and their children the highest goal of pedagogical reform: to educate rationally and morally sound human beings. Yet far from being abstract and idealistic, the program responded to a pressing political need, as it meant to configure citizens who could learn to govern themselves through mastering their daily lives, and especially their nonproductive time transformed into edifying leisure.

Conclusions

From the point of view of leisure, the Museo del Pueblo appears as an experiment responding to the most ambitious aspects of the early Republic's agenda, rooted in the belief that the peasants' condition could be improved by exercising disinterested art spectatorship at a specially structured space of contemplation. Heirs to the late-Victorian pedagogy of art and entertain-

6. The article is signed with the initials M.A., as indicated in the bibliography.

ment for workers' children and grounded in the doctrine of "rational recreation," itinerant museums promoted attention and discipline. However, their most essential task did not aim at controlling bodies. Instead, responding to Cossío's understanding of leisure as a set of activities that could eventually guide the observer to understanding the beauty of creation, museums were designed to set conditions for a nonutilitarian viewing experience. Given how often, in the course of the debates about the future of agrarian reform, Spain's rural areas were described as cultural deserts and how much the politicians, journalists, and even some missionaries emphasized their state of complete abandonment, it is truly remarkable that Cossío and those traveling with the museums never addressed spectators as "totally uncultured" individuals, but rather proposed to prepare them for philosophical observation.

At the same time, one cannot ignore the political implications of this apparently disinterested activity that, in accordance with British liberal ideas, was aimed to produce self-improving subjects for the success of the State's policy. Nineteenth-century Spanish educators had frequently insisted that the transformation that they had initiated was tectonically long and did not involve an overthrowing of political institutions. But history, in the way the Republic's "reformist" governments saw it, was calling for fast measures for securing social justice. In the *institucionista* spirit of individualism, they considered that only a society of self-reliant citizens could effectively transform its institutions, and thus did not separate the agenda of "making people" from that of carrying out agrarian reform. Ultimately, it was the reform's slow pace that made it a political failure. But could the Republic have acted any faster if it was not just the land, but also the nature of the people working it, that it had wanted to transform?

Of course, the question remains whether the program was implemented as envisioned. Available reports suggest that missionaries explained the museum displays in terms of historical plots and artistic techniques (*Memo-ria del Patronato* 52–53). From a *krausista* standpoint, this was hardly enough to educate peasants as philosopher-observers. While further inquiry would be needed to evaluate the class agenda on both sides of this discussion, one can only guess what real audiences actually thought or understood. Furthermore, since the missionaries reporting about the Museo del Pueblo's successes and failures were urban students educated in the spirit of the *institucionista* reform and aware of the project's importance for Cossío, they might have been all too willing to write the liberal ideas into their experi-

ences. Thus, finding a way to reconstruct audience response would be crucial for analyzing the effects of the Museo del Pueblo.

But although the program's actual impact is yet to be defined, it is clear that the educated public placed exceptionally high hopes on its success and had confidence in its political significance. This is why Val del Omar's pictures showing the peasants "vibrating in unison" with Spanish art were also used as a visual embodiment of a wish that Spain's villagers would soon stop shedding their fellow citizens' blood: "Sólo así, en esa labor tenaz y generosa, podrá esperar que un día los pueblos, desembarazados de su ignorancia, dejen de salpicar de sangre y de barbarie la vida española" (Montero Alonso). Translated into the language of agrarian reform, the photographs of clean peasants absorbed by paintings published in urban newspapers and magazines worked as a promise that the experience of art could help to overcome not only cultural, but also political contradictions between town and country by transforming peasants into citizens capable of governing themselves. Police and the army would have nothing to do as long as a museum could be brought in.

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