CH'IXI EPISTEMOLOGY AND THE POTOSÍ PRINCIPLE IN THE 21ST CENTURY

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The 2010–11 exhibition The Potosí Principle: How Can We Sing the Song of the Lord in an Alien Land? Colonial Image Production in the Global Economy, curated by artists Alice Creischer and Andreas Siekmann with the scholar Max Jorge Hinderer, explored global capitalism's callous dynamics from the surprising perspective of the Spanish colonial empire and its distinctive imagery.[1] Initially installed in Madrid in 2010 and then traveling to Berlin and La Paz, the show worked across the institutionally defined and often rigorously guarded boundaries between curatorial practice, aesthetic expression, and scholarly research. Its thematic elements related the violent conquest of the Andes to global capitalism's callous dynamics in the 21st century. The curators presented primitive accumulation—i.e., the willful destruction of a population's sustenance patterns, reducing it to dependence on low-paid and often dangerous labor for economic survival—as a key capitalist "principle" that facilitated the exploitation of the Americas by the European economy. They overlapped primitive

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[1] The Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia in Madrid, Spain, hosted the exhibition between May 12 and September 6, 2010. From Madrid, it traveled to the Haus der Kulturen der Welt in Berlin, Germany (October 8, 2010, to January 2, 2011) and the Museo Nacional de Arte and MUSEF in La Paz, Bolivia (February 22–May 30, 2011). See Alice Creischer, Max Jorge Hinderer, and Andreas Siekmann, eds., *The Potosí Principle: How Can We Sing the Song of the Lord in an Alien Land? Colonial Image Production in the Global Economy*, exhibition catalog (Madrid: Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia and Köln: Walther König, 2010).

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accumulation with another meaning of the word principle—i.e., origin—to elaborate a genealogy that linked the framework of the European world system and its specific model of power since the 16th century to essential features of neoliberal globalization and contemporary art.

Creischer, Hinderer, and Siekmann invited artists from Bolivia, Argentina, Spain, China, Russia, England, and Germany to respond to a carefully selected array of Andean baroque colonial paintings, prints, codices, and books. They called on the artists to probe these cultural texts for the way they mediate colonial ideology. As a result, the artists responded with installations of photographs, data on liquid crystal display monitors, film and video projections, newly painted canvases, printed material, and performances. They forged their works at the fissures of temporal difference, at the margins between fundamentally incommensurable cultures.

The curators also organized the exhibition in a way that sought to recover the museum's role as an educational institution and constituent part of the public sphere. They used the curatorial process, installation techniques, and accompanying catalogue to question how the show addressed its themes and established its relationship with spectators. Creischer and her colleagues sidestepped traditional object-oriented curatorial practice to ask how their exhibition might open history to subjugated knowledge and alternative interpretations. Instead of organizing a conventional display of objects on the museum's walls and floor, they experimented with figures of framing and viewpoint. They developed innovative exposition techniques and narratives to foster a new perspective of the colonial encounter and its legacy. The methods included novel ways of arranging and presenting objects and relaying information, addressing, assembling, guiding visitors through the gallery display, and interacting with the materials presented. The Potosí Principle merged history and place, discourse and design, the performative and the reflexive. Against the Western framework's standard curatorial protocols, the show's curators paid as much attention to the politics of display as to the display of politics.

Despite The Potosí Principle's creative installation techniques and revisionist history, the exhibition generated a considerable scandal when it opened at Madrid's Reina Sofía Museum. El Colectivo, a self-organized group of Andean–based artists and scholars committed to challenging the insularity of European historical narratives, accused the curators of continuing the logic through which the modern (i.e., capitalist North

Atlantic) West has represented others. Decoloniality recognizes colonialism as a process that silences, represses, and subalternizes histories, subjectivities, knowledges, and languages. The collective argued that Creischer, Hinderer, and Siekmann operated with the delusional idea that the debate on colonialism could take place as if the European and the Andean sides were equal. They maintained that it is not for those who have never been the victims of colonialism to impose the discussion's framework. El Colectivo's decolonial practices sought to recover silenced, repressed, and subalternized histories and validate Indigenous ways of knowing.[2] The collective also strived to show the interstitial knowledge forms created by the subjugated in the Andes in their effort to survive the colonial impositions. They considered these knowledge forms, typically discredited, erased, and ignored by the colonialists, as tools that enabled Indigenous populations to establish representations of the world according to their own terms. They also refused to be shut up in their cultural past in what they determined to be a purely apologetic relation to their heritage. To allow this form of congealment, the group argued, would be to respond exactly as the colonialists expected. Instead, El Colectivo sought to show the many ways Indigenous artists continue to process their ancestral culture through contemporary forms and media.

El Colectivo published a counter-catalog, *Principio Potosí Reverso* (The Potosí Principle in Reverse), denouncing Creischer and the others for continuing the dominant Western formation's tendency to exoticize and primitivize Indigenous cultures and to pay insufficient attention to the non-Eurocentric conceptions of emancipation and liberation through which these cultures have exerted agency.[3] The curators of The

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[2] As a school of thought focusing primarily on the epistemic violence inflicted on colonized peoples through colonial thought, speech, writing, and imaging practices, decoloniality seeks to re-learn the knowledge pushed aside, forgotten, buried, or discredited by the forces of modernity, settler-colonialism, and racial capitalism. The concept, indebted to the work of Aimé Césaire, originates with Frantz Fanon's reflections on racism's psychological impact on colonized peoples in *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961). It explores the power relations that remain after the end of direct colonization. Nelson Maldonado-Torres explains that one must distinguish "coloniality" from "colonialism": "Colonialism denotes a political and economic relation in which the sovereignty of a nation or a people rests on the power of another nation, which makes such nation an empire. Coloniality, instead, refers to long-standing patterns of power that emerged as a result of colonialism, but that define culture, labor, intersubjective relations, and knowledge production well beyond the strict limits of colonial administrations. Thus, coloniality survives colonialism." Nelson Maldonado-Torres, "On the Coloniality of Being: Contributions to the Development of a Concept," *Cultural Studies*, 21:2–3 (2007), 243.

[3] See Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui and El Colectivo, eds., *Principio Potosí Reverso*, exhibition catalog (Madrid: Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, 2010).

Potosí Principle, the collective argues, framed their show largely from the hegemon's perspective and failed to recognize sufficiently the semiotic resistance to hegemonic forms of knowledge that Andean cultures have long developed to mediate oppressive European regimes. Counter to Creischer, Hinderer, and Siekmann's historical approach that focused largely on the role of colonial actors, El Colectivo called for greater focus on the processes of change that continue to emanate from the daily practices of Indigenous people living at the intersection of colonial histories and present realities. The past, from this perspective, is alive and perpetually being rewritten by the actions of the present. This notion of history as a source of renovation and critique against present conditions of amnesia and domination tends to come from subaltern perspectives. It brings the past and present together in a dynamic way, enriching and contesting the two without ever hybridizing or fusing them. It also highlights the danger of presuming one can use Western thinking in non-Western contexts without causing problems. El Colectivo's criticism of The Potosí Principle parallels the often fraught negotiations between artists, curators, and curated cultures at the boundary zones between art frameworks.

THE POTOSÍ PRINCIPLE

The Potosí Principle investigated pictures created in Andean mining sites under Spanish rule. The curators drew on Karl Marx's observations on the silver mountain of Potosí to theorize an exhibition that rethought modernity's history. Marx writes that "the discovery of gold and silver in America, the extirpation, enslavement and entombment in mines of the indigenous population of that continent . . . characterize the dawn of the era of capitalist production . . . [and] are the chief moments of primitive accumulation."[4] The Spanish's exploitation of America's riches, from this perspective, stands as what Stuart Hall describes as "the first attempt to construct a world market, the result of which was to constitute the rest of the world in a subordinate relationship to Europe and to Western civilization."[5] It represents "the first phase of globalization . . . the era when Western Europe breaks out of its confinement . . . and the . . . exploration and conquest of the non-European world begins."[6] Colonization and imperialism are the central foci of this development, and thus in the "world history" of modernity.[7] They are crucial to the modern world system model or metaphor, as originally articulated by Immanuel Wallerstein. This system, which dates the 16th century as the crucial era of its constitution, exploited the Americas to develop a capitalist world economy.[8]

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[4] Karl Marx, *Capital: Vol. 1: A Critique of Political Economy*, trans. Ben Fowkes (London: Penguin, 1990), 915.

[5] Stuart Hall, "Creolization, Diaspora, and Hybridity in the Context of Globalization," in *Créolité and Creolization: Documenta 11_Platform 3*, ed. Okwui Enwezor (Ostfildern-Ruit, Germany: Hatje Cantz, 2002), 193.

In their exhibition, Creischer and her colleagues compared the relationship between the world system that linked the American and European economies in the early modern period to the current state of capitalist relations. They presented Potosí as the axis of a geopolitical centrality, locating modernity's roots in the brutal extraction methods developed in the colonization of the "New World." The exhibition also tracked the image production apparatus that accompanied that process in both Europe and the Andes. Modernity, in this regard, is a product of colonial occupation's spatialization—of the center-periphery relationships that characterize colonialism. Creischer and colleagues linked the two periods by comparing current conditions with earlier patterns of violence experienced by forebears in the Andes.

The curators installed their exhibition idiosyncratically, structuring the gallery space to include various chairs, scaffolding, stairs, and platforms and arranged the artworks at different levels and multiple angles. Four pathways offered alternative trajectories to specific junctions. Along the way, Creischer and her colleagues juxtaposed 22 different 17th- and 18th-century paintings from the Potosí painting school with European prints of the same period and contemporary actualizations. The curators brought Andean colonial paintings that evince different aspects of the Spanish occupation's economic and social impact into dialogue with European images of the Counter-Reformation and artworks made by contemporary artists. As such, their choices troubled the basic categorizations of linear art historical narratives in terms of temporal and geographic correlations. The show spurned a historiography predicated on the nation-state in favor of a global perspective. It also rejected knowledge that follows conventional rules of classical composition, aesthetics, and art historical classification and writing. Instead, the

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[6] Ibid.

[7] Ibid.

[8] Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World-System: Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World-Economy in the Sixteenth Century* (New York: Academic Press, 1974).

exhibition generated new understandings of global modernity from the viewpoint of a part of the Viceroyalty of Peru that is now Bolivia.

Creischer and her colleagues identified the Spanish exploitation of the rich Potosí mines as a forerunner of present-day financial globalization. They showed that the abundant treasure led to the creation of the silver standard and then to the first global trading currency, the silver coin (the *real de ocho*), which the Spanish Empire minted after 1598. The curators also contended that the development of this first global currency paralleled the enormous generation and diffusion of images in the 16th century. Each development followed in step with the other. The exhibition revealed that buttressing the imperialist endeavor required not only a tremendous movement of people, money, and commodities but also a vast propagation of pictures. The Spanish had established their empire with less regard for geographic proximity than for a common imagescape and shared religious ideals. After Martin Luther had mobilized the first art and book prints for the cause of the Protestant Reformation, the Catholic Counter-Reformation responded with images. Challenging Luther's word-based conquest with a pictorial one, Phillip II centralized and made a monopoly of engravings that were produced en masse as printed books in Antwerp.[9] These engravings circulated across vast distances, forming new affiliations between people. Importantly, the Viceroyalty of Peru functioned as a kind of factory for this proliferation of pictures. Counter-Reformation figures sent many prints from Antwerp to the Viceroyalty, where local artisans would reproduce them in paint. The Spanish then distributed the paintings throughout their far-flung empire.[10] The exhibition included several of these paintings.

The Potosí Principle featured colonial pictures pertaining to the silver mountain's discovery and excavation. Most of these were anonymous, made by Indigenous artists in the high plains. Not all the artworks had come from the city of Potosí, but they all related to the exhibition's principle. The first artworks that visitors encountered upon entering the gallery were two large reproductions of 1705 engravings by Juan Eusebio Nieremberg that had been meant to inspire fear. Nieremberg's compendium of terrifying images had circulated in Peru's viceroyalty, where the Spanish had translated the text into Guarani. The curators also included other huge tableaux from Andean churches. Local community leaders had regularly made deals with the Spanish, receiving money for workers. The ruthless entrepreneurs had shown their devoutness, and had offset critiques for profiting from selling townspeople, by commissioning paintings for the local church. Pictures such as the ones in the exhibition thus related directly to the colonial regime's politics of slavery and to the worker migration system necessary to keep Potosí's mines running.

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[9] As Alice Creischer discovered, the Plantin-Moretus printing house in Antwerp is closely connected to this history. Alice Creischer, "On the Global Circulation of Paintings," in *The Potosí Principle*, 24–25.

[10] Ibid.

At the most immediate level, then, The Potosí Principle offered a revisionist account of the foundation of modernity. The exhibition's narrative located modernity's origins in primitive accumulation's willful violence and plunder. It presented Europe's economic history as having been inseparable from colonialism since the 16th century. It argued that Europe's modernity could not exist without the "state of exception" of its center-periphery relationships established through colonialism. But Creischer, Hinderer, and Siekmann's more comprehensive project also interrupted museological protocols and moved the exhibition-making process toward considering its own discursive conditions. The curators problematized conventional presentational forms and institutional exhibition formats by not hanging the colonial paintings featured in the show on the museum's walls. Instead, they suspended them from the ceiling or hung them on temporary support surfaces. This effort to avoid direct physical contact with the museum's traditional display sites was a symbolic gesture of defiance, even resistance. But it also troubled the relationship between the colonial legacy and European institutions. Rather than ripping the South American canvases away from the context that had generated their making, Creischer and colleagues presented them discursively, as ethnographic artifacts of a larger historical narrative.

The Potosí Principle also developed a third major theme: that colonization and its concomitant procedures of primitive accumulation and ideological warfare were not transitory phenomena, since similar processes continue unabated in the world that we inhabit today. One sees many examples of colonization's legacy in neoliberal globalization and the multiple states of exception that capitalism's current systemic deepening has opened. Potosí was, in many important ways, the 16th- and 17th-century equivalent of today's Lagos, Delhi, Baku, and extensive areas of countries such as Greece, Brazil, and Indonesia—all sites of exploitation and wealth generation for the global capitalist world.

In order to show both the Potosí principle's continuing relevance and the parallels between the colonial and neoliberal regimes, the curators invited twenty-four artists and collectives to take part in the show. Creischer and her colleagues asked the artists to respond to one of the colonial paintings included in the exhibition (in some cases, to more than one), relating the chosen paintings to current forms of economic globalization. The colonial pictures are regressive insofar as their patrons commissioned them to support the Spanish conquest's interests. But the contemporary artists read the paintings against the grain and drew parallels between them and the way in which today's art institutions function to legitimate the new economic elite's power.

Chto Delat's *The Tower: Songspiel* is a case in point. The then-St. Petersburg–based collective's installation parodied the new capitalist plutocracy in Russia. The production took the form of a filmed theatre-play with music, in the tradition of Bertolt Brecht. It featured two platforms, one above the other. On the top stage stood the new Russian oligarchy, comprising economic and religious elites, who discussed what to install in the public spaces of the new office tower of Gazprom, the state energy corporation, in St. Petersburg. Plans to construct the enormous glass skyscraper provoked a heated debate and much public opposition in Russia.[11] In the installation, the elites concluded that a contemporary art museum would be the most helpful addition to those public spaces, because it would provide entertainment and distraction for the hoi polloi who stood on the platform below. The dialogue exposed the conniving schemes developed by oligarchs to maintain the status quo, as well as contemporary art's role in that process. Chto Delat's installation related to several colonial paintings. One of them, the anonymously rendered *Antonio López de Quiroga* (1660), depicts the most successful entrepreneur in Potosí during the city's heyday, and probably the richest man in 17th-century Peru. Quiroga, also known as the Silver Baron, periodically provided bread-and-circus-type entertainment to appease the poor and less fortunate and keep their favor, a practice that the new Russian establishment has also found beneficial.

Creischer, Hinderer, and Siekmann's exhibition contended that capital's primitive accumulation had its origin in early colonialism and continues unabated today. To advance this thesis, the curators developed exhibition techniques that preempted the museum visitors' identification with the North Atlantic art framework's standard display practices. The Potosí Principle disrupted the unity, continuity, and closure of Western exhibition protocols and narrative conventions, drawing attention to the constructedness of these ways of doing things. The curators' working assumption was that foregrounding the exhibition's manufactured nature would communicate reality's contingency, and thus its changeability.

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[11] For an account of the debate, see Dmitry Vorobyev and Thomas Campbell, "The Gazprom Tower: Everything Changes for the Better!," chtodelat.org (April 2010), https://chtodelat.org/b8-newspapers/12-43/dmitry-vorobyev-a-thomas-campbell-the-gazprom-tower-everything-changes-for-the-better-1/.

EL COLECTIVO

The innovative techniques and revisionist aspects of this exhibition, though fascinating in many ways, were not enough to prevent criticism of its ideological agenda from figures working in the South American framework. Even before The Potosí Principle opened, the members of El Colectivo condemned it. The group rebuked Creischer and her colleagues for ignoring the relations of knowledge systems and the complicated dynamic between hegemonic and counterhegemonic understandings. This oversight, El Colectivo argued, was to the detriment of Indigenous histories and the ecology of knowledges that has continued to develop in the region. According to El Colectivo, in those instances where The Potosí Principle's curators addressed Indigenous epistemologies, they demeaned those epistemologies as anachronistic, quaint, or peripheral. The curators sought merely to explain Indigenous epistemologies rather than knowing with or alongside them. Hence, a relation of domination remained.

Creischer and her colleagues had initially invited Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, a sociologist of Aymara descent, to join The Potosí Principle's curatorial team. The collaboration had started well. Rivera Cusicanqui had assembled El Colectivo and researched colonial artworks still in rural churches. As a group composed mostly of Andean subjects who sought to read the past for glimpses of nonconformity rather than solely as a record of domination, El Colectivo's role in engaging local communities and securing loans for the international exhibition was crucial to its success. The group introduced Creischer and colleagues to people who continued to practice disidentificatory strategies that Andean communities had developed centuries earlier to mediate colonial art and the tyrannical religious rituals the Spanish had imposed on them. The Indigenous population, for instance, had hidden many of its deities and beliefs behind Catholic saints and ceremonies. These practices, in which local cosmologies overlaid European imaginaries, served multiple protective functions for local subjectivities. They shielded the inner world of subjectivity from colonialism's social and political violence, and they conserved, through secrecy, a psychic or emotional space for open-ended contemplation, wherein Indigenous people could nurture the relationship to their unnamed ancestors and rituals, and thus preserve and renew a separate identity.

But Rivera Cusicanqui and El Colectivo soon questioned what they had come to see as the profoundly deterministic principle underpinning the exhibition and its underlying notion that European culture had entirely subdued and destroyed Indigenous ways in the Andes. These doubts led El Colectivo to emphasize the various forms and representations that native communities had developed to resist colonial hegemony from the beginning. According to the collective, for centuries, Andean communities had struggled to mediate and resignify colonial structures, arts, and doctrines that had been designed to obliterate Indigenous identities. They worked on and against imperial ideology. El Colectivo stressed the various ways the Indigenous population had recontextualized its worldview in the sacred icons and programs imposed on them by the colonizers. As Rivera Cusicanqui explains, the local use of "the subversive capacity of festivals and Indigenous orality . . . swerved the evangelizing connotations of the Christian saints, virgins, and deities, and reconnected these figures with the energies of the earth and celestial phenomena." The result "germinated a kind of *ch'ixi* [double-bind] epistemology that allowed the forces of lightning and the eyes of water and the *uywiris* [genius loci] to coexist without mixing with the various cults of the Catholic images conserved in the rural churches."[12] Instead of a hybrid fusion of European and Indigenous cultures, this *ch'ixi* epistemology moved between opposing worlds. It converted that dichotomy into "a purposeful referent rather than an obstacle to the subject's integrity."[13]

In its effort to account for this form of resistance, which theorizes the active weaving of opposed worlds and contradictory meanings, El Colectivo proposed including several objects in The Potosí Principle.

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[12] Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, as cited in Molly Geidel, "Una mirada desde afuera: Explicando el fracaso de una colaboración con Principio Potosí," in *Principio Potosí Reverso*, 57. Translation mine.

[13] Ibid.

One of the show's first major setbacks occurred when Berlin's Ethnological Museum turned down the curators' request to borrow an essential *khipu* from their enormous collection to display at the traveling exhibition's Bolivian stop. *Khipu*s are record-keeping devices used by the Inca as administrative tools to register different services, obligations, and products. The museum's resolve to grant loans from their holdings of Andean artifacts only for the show's European venues offended El Colectivo, whose members openly wondered why the German museum refused to exhibit the plundered *khipu*s in locations where their ritualistic function continues to resonate.

In the light of Creischer, Hinderer, and Siekmann's decision to exhibit colonial paintings that operate as pilgrimage, commemorative, and devotional objects in the Andes to publics in European art museums that have little to no connection to them, the Ethnological Museum's response exacerbated the tension between the group and the curators. It raised the powerful question of who gets to represent whom. For El Colectivo, the Berlin institution's reaction was a continuation and extension of the asymmetrical power relations that had historically divided Europeans and those they had colonized.[14]

Conflicts grew as Rivera Cusicanqui and her cohort identified more *khipu*s they wanted to include in the show. El Colectivo also proposed to display maps of Indigenous trade routes based on the coca leaf and migratory pilgrimages, and hours of video documentation of contemporary patron saint festivals, which syncretistically combine ritual libations, dances, and chants with the cult of nature and Christian symbolism, alongside newly recorded video interviews with community members. The video recordings, the collective argued, would ground the exhibition's relationship to the South American art framework by showing how Andean communities had inscribed Spanish colonial imagery into local customs—into what Rivera Cusicanqui describes as "the lived space of the Andean geography in the cycle of festivities that mark turning points in time/space (*pacha*)."[15] The recordings' oral histories would narrate the proper history of the Andean region's Indigenous peoples, allowing the people themselves to relate their worldviews and ways of life; their struggles throughout the centuries; their heroes; and their aspirations concerning justice, dignity, and self-determination. Putting this history on display would decolonialize knowledge and provide evidence of Indigenous Andean culture's continuation into the present, despite the Spanish's concerted efforts to obliterate local systems of understanding.

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[14] For accounts of the failed collaboration, see Molly Geidel, "Una mirada desde afuera," in *Principio Potosí Reverso*, 56–60, and Eduardo Schwartzberg Arteaga, "Cultura, patrimonio y arte: Eufemismos de la cadena colonial," in *Principio Potosí Reverso*, 47–55.

[15] Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, "Principio Potosí: Otra mirada a la totalidad," in *Principio Potosí Reverso*, 2. Translation mine.

Creischer, Hinderer, and Siekmann revealed their exhibition's epistemic limit when they rejected El Colectivo's proposal to use oral history as a tool of resistance. They reasoned that European audiences would perceive the links that the Andean group sought to elaborate as "folkloric," which would cast the exhibition as replicating exoticism's trade in emotional rather than intellectual communication.[16] But Rivera Cusicanqui and her cohort were unconvinced, seeing in the curators' novel presentation form yet another European imposition that rendered Andean culture static and historically foreclosed, symbolically severed from the present in any terms other than "exotic" or "primitive." They rejected the curators' suggestion that the oral histories would associate the Andean community's artistic productions with the folkloric and firmly locate those productions in the past.

However, for Rivera Cusicanqui and El Colectivo, the most disturbing comments from Creischer and her colleagues expressed fear that the Indigenous point of view might dominate the exhibition. In the eyes of El Colectivo, the European-based curators' anxiety about compromising their project limited their ability to comprehend the Andean framework's *ch'ixi* epistemology—how it developed plural, diverse, and contradictory tactics as a way of moving between opposing worlds without ever fusing them. It also denied the curators the opportunity to see an open and relational culture in the Andes that continues to develop to this day, rather than a direct, unchanging cultural trajectory stemming from an immutable origin.

For El Colectivo, Creischer, Hinderer, and Siekmann's determination to link colonial abuses to capitalism's current conditions exteriorized the historical record. The curators did not grant a broad enough array of contemporary Andean cultural producers the right to speak through their own framework's codes and conventions. Instead, Creischer and her colleagues used mostly foreign artists and creative

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[16] Alice Creischer, Max Hinderer, and Andreas Siekmann in correspondence with Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, as cited in Geidel, "Una mirada desde afuera," 58.

Western production and exhibition techniques to speak for them, largely neglecting the persistent asymmetries in this presentation. Although the curators were well-meaning and were marginal in their own ways to Western hegemonic culture, they were also relatively unfamiliar with local Andean codes, were comparatively affluent, and were working from the viewpoint of a very different art framework. El Colectivo believed that the North Atlantic–based curators had failed to fully consider these facts of historic domination. The exhibition gave short shrift to the struggles of those on the colonial side of the physical, symbolic, and epistemic boundary that has determined the radical division between metropolitan and colonial forms of sociability that structures the modern world system. It also undervalued the selective appropriation practices that had made the relationship between colonizer and colonized far more complex, ambiguous, and convoluted than it appeared on the surface. In El Colectivo's eyes, the curators of The Potosí Principle failed to understand the radical alterity by which Andean communities had imagined themselves as Other in order to understand *their* others. The curators overlooked traces of microresistance and insubordination in spaces that were invisible to power. As such, the show became a sign of the hegemon's blindness to ongoing mediations at its expanding boundary zones. Through an Indigenous lens, the exhibition revealed more about the audacity and arrogance that propels Western actors to curate cultures than about the art and history of the cultures they ostensibly set out to represent.