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## Cisneros Gift to MoMA Will Boost Latin American Holdings, Research

Trustee donating more than 100 works of geometric abstraction, endowing study center



Collector and philanthropist Patricia Phelps de Cisneros with Museum of Modern Art Director Glenn Lowry, next to a painting by Venezuelan artist Omar Carreño. *PHOTO: BESS ADLER FOR THE WALL STREET JOURNAL*

By **PIA CATTON**

Oct. 17, 2016 10:30 a.m. ET

The Museum of Modern Art is about to boost its holdings and scholarship of Latin American art.

In a gift called “transformative” by museum director Glenn Lowry, the museum will receive more than 100 works from the collection of Patricia Phelps de Cisneros . A separate financial endowment will establish a new center within the museum: the Patricia Phelps de Cisneros Research Institute for the Study of Art from Latin America.

Ms. Cisneros and her husband Gustavo, owner of the media conglomerate Cisneros Group, have already given the museum 40 works during the last 16 years.

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The new gift, however, deepens MoMA's collection in a specific field: geometric abstraction by Latin American artists including Lygia Clark, Hélio Oiticica, Willys de Castro and Alejandro Otero. It is formally

given by the Colección Patricia Phelps de Cisneros, founded in the early 1990s as a program of the Fundación Cisneros.

When Ms. Cisneros began collecting art, Latin American abstraction was largely overlooked. And her choices were personal, she said during an interview in Mr. Lowry's office: "It wasn't a calculated collection."

Her youth in Caracas, Venezuela gave her an aesthetic affinity for modernism, she said, and she carried that with her as she visited galleries on trips with her husband throughout Latin America.

"I'd ask to see works of abstraction, and no one else was really interested," she said. "The galleries would sometime have to go to the back and take the dust off them."

Her insight gave her the pick of the crop, said Mr. Lowry. "Today, these works are incredibly rare. You couldn't duplicate this collection—and the market has caught up."

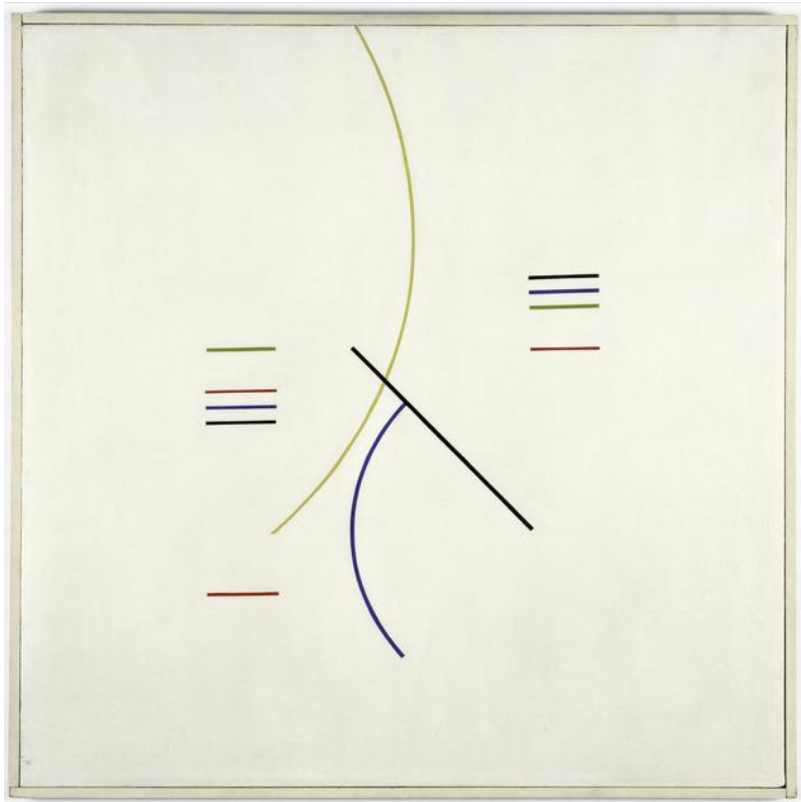
Her focused collection now takes the museum's holdings in this sub-genre from "good to great," said Mr. Lowry. "Then it expands the base of our overall holdings of Latin American art."

Ms. Cisneros has been on MoMA's board since 1992. This gift evolved over about nine years, she said, in an effort to select works from which the museum would benefit effectively, either by adding new artists or expanding the presence of artists already in the collection.

An exhibition drawn from the gift is expected after the expansion of the museum's campus, possibly in 2019 or 2020.

The new Cisneros Institute, set to be established with MoMA's midtown property and open within a year, is created to address a question the couple considered while structuring the gift: "How do you ensure these works of art have an ongoing life at the museum?" said Mr. Lowry.

The Institute will address all the museum's Latin American holdings through publications, conferences, scholarship and more.



This 1948 work, from Argentine painter Alfredo Hlito's 'Curves and Straight' series, is one of more than 100 works of Latin American geometric abstraction gifted to the Museum of Modern Art from the collection of Patricia Phelps de Cisneros.

*PHOTO: ALFREDO HLITO*

**Mr. Lowry declined to put a financial value on the artworks and called the endowment for the institute “substantial” enough to fund a staff and rigorous program.**

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