



# Mestizo Modernism: Race, Nation and Identity in Latin American Culture, 1900-1940

*Tace Hedrick*

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We use the term "modernism" almost exclusively to characterize the work of European and American writers and artists who struggled to portray a new kind of fractured urban life typified by mechanization and speed. Between the 1880s and 1930s, Latin American artists were similarly engaged - but with a difference. While other modernists drew from "primitive" cultures for an alternative sense of creativity, Latin American modernists were taking a cue from local sources, primarily indigenous and black populations in their own countries. Although these artists remained outsiders to modernism elsewhere as a result of their race, nation, and identity, their racial heritage served as a positive tool in negotiating their relationship to the dichotomy between tradition and modernity. In *Mestizo Modernism* Tace Hedrick focuses on four key artists who represent Latin American modernism - Peruvian poet Cesar Vallejo, Chilean poet Gabriela Mistral, Mexican muralist Diego Rivera, and Mexican artist Frida Kahlo. Hedrick interrogates what being "modern" and "American" meant for them and illuminates the cultural contexts within which they worked, as well as the formal methods they shared, including the connection they drew between ancient cultures and modern technologies. In so doing, she defines "modernism" more as a time frame at the turn of the twentieth century, marked broadly across the arts and national boundaries, than as a strict aesthetic or formal category. In fact, this look at Latin American artists will force the reconceptualization of what modernism has meant in academic study and what it might mean for future research.

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