

THE BORN IDENTITY

THERE'S MORE TO LATIN AMERICA THAN "THE BANANA, THE SAMBA, TANGO, SALSA, DRUGS, AND DICTATORS," SAYS EDITOR FELIPE TABORDA IN HIS PREFACE TO **LATIN AMERICAN GRAPHIC DESIGN** (TASCHEN), A BOOK THAT PROVES THAT THE REGION HAS, AT LONG LAST, EARNED A GOLD STAR ON THE INTERNATIONAL DESIGN MAP. HERE, DIANE VADINO SELECTS FOUR OF THE MOST EXCITING ARTISTS FROM THE REGION.

ESTEBAN SALGADO

Esteban Salgado's rejection of the First World design scene was more personal than most: Salgado lived in New York City for five years, studying at the School of Visual Arts, before returning home to Quito, Ecuador, where he now works. "This is the place where I belong," says Salgado, whose work includes designing logos, editorial projects, and typefaces. "Everything here feeds my work—the environment, people, weather. It's very important for me to be here—and with technology, it doesn't matter where I am." Salgado, 35, is happy in Ecuador, where he says the country's cultural identity shapes the work of its homegrown designers. "People are interested in our past," he says, "and this idea of being in the Third World is a big thing for us."

VICTOR CANDIA

"Advertising is the evil tentacle of everything that's wrong with the system," says Victor Candia, explaining why he left that industry for the comparative moral goodness of editorial graphic design. "When you work in advertising, you see the tricks, how the new color of clothes is exactly the same as the old color, just 40% more expensive. You sell a lot of things people don't really need—it's Machiavelian." Thus relieved of his former work, Candia, 35, left his native Paraguay for Argentina—first for Córdoba and then for Buenos Aires, where he still lives, dividing his work between design, illustration, and photography; his Flickr account having radically improved his chances for finding work outside of South America. "We're so far away from everything else—we have always been the backyard of graphic design," he says. "But we have to earn a place—it's not going to be given to us."

OCTAVIO MARTINO

"It's so funny," says editorial designer Octavio Martino, 35. "If you're an artist and you tell people in your country that you've shown some work in New York, they'll immediately be impressed. They just don't suspect that there are bad curators and galleries full of crap all over the world." That reverse prejudice is just one of the challenges facing designers in Latin America, but Martino says he's happy to stay in his hometown of Córdoba, Argentina. "Mostly, I create work only to be seen in my country, and I like to use what is swimming in our memories: old candy wrapping paper, legend-

ary ads, visual icons from school," he says. "I like to call up things that almost everybody in Argentina would know—it's funny and ephemeral and almost always local." But he does sound entirely convinced of an emerging regional design scene, or at least his creative adherence to it. "I don't believe the design we produce here in Latin America is particularly different," says. "If we avoid folkloric then contemporary design almost the same, no matter where it's being made."

MASA

Graphic artist Miguel Vasquez, who works as MASA, says Venezuelans, in particular, have their own set of national stereotypes to escape: "I choose to portray Venezuelan culture outside of the clichés—soap operas, Miss Universe baseball players, and President Chávez," says Vasquez, 33, who lives in the capital city of Caracas and whose clients include preeminent global brands Nike, Volkswagen, Sony Ericsson, Nickelodeon, and Absolut. He considered the emerging Latin American design scene before—having edited a book on the subject for Gestalten Verlag—and it's not so much a move as a collection of local developments: "In the last four years, the changes in Latin America, for better or worse, have brought a call for more local content and design as well, rather than importing it from abroad," he says. "But no matter what ideas behind it, there needs to be good design. Otherwise it's just cheesy souvenirs with a folkloric flavor."



nylon
guys
56