INTERVENXIONS

2023 Volume 2 The Latinx Project at NYU

Edited by: Néstor David Pastor & Alex Santana
Design by: Jessy V. Castillo, Rara Matter
Printed & Bound by: Typecraft, Los Angeles, California

Cover Image: "Amor," 2018 © Amina Cruz

Support for initiatives of The Latinx Project at NYU is provided, in part, by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the Ford Foundation, and the New York University Office of the Provost.

Type set in ANCHO, Spirits, and Basis Grotesque.

ISBN: 979-8-9889535-0-0
ISSN: 2836-4783

THE LATINX PROJECT

Mellon Foundation

Ford Foundation

MASTHEAD

INTERVENXIONS

2023 Volume 2 The Latinx Project at NYU

CONTENTS

A COMING BETWEEN

Three years in, the elevator pitch for Intervenxions remains dynamic and ever-evolving, but generally speaking, ours is a broad mandate to produce original writings that echo both the interdisciplinary work of The Latinx Project and the resulting eclecticism it catalyzes, thereby ensuring the work we do as editors reflects the abundance of the world we live in—irregardless of any specific label. More simply put, Intervenxions is a platform that attempts to hold as much space as feasibly possible, a coming between, per its Latin origins. The boundaries are arbitrary in that sense, but the intersections are not. That is the work of this introduction and Intervenxions more broadly: to weave together seemingly tenuous threads that would otherwise go unnoticed or underappreciated. Still, we decided to divide the volume around the most salient themes among the fifteen essays included.

–

Art Criticism is at the forefront of what we publish at Intervenxions because there remains a lack of art writing with a Latinx specificity. In filling this gap, we have the honor of publishing the writing of emerging art historians like Clara María Apostolatos, whose essay on the work of artists Camilo Godoy and Carlos Martiel is featured in this volume. In this essay, Apostolatos foregrounds affect, touch, and movement as praxes that "allow us to examine something that is never seen but may be read or heard about," to use the words of Godoy. What remains unseen is precisely what Intervenxions aims to highlight. In Julianne Chandler's essay on Bolivian and diasporic feminist art and activism, the author weaves together the diverse practices of four artists, examining their subversive, decolonial, and critical perspectives through art. Seamlessly connecting artists in Bolivia and those of the diaspora in the U.S, Chandler's analysis blurs the lines between Latinx and Latin American art, which is another ongoing consideration for Intervenxions. Emphasizing a subversive engagement with touch and play, Laura G. Gutierrez's firsthand account of rafa esparza's participatory work Corpo RanfLA: Terra Cruiser is unique in its presentation of liberatory potential. In Gutierrez's account, esparza's work celebrates a specific community of L.A. peers—despite its presentation at Art Basel Miami Beach—while nodding to histories of gay cruising and West Coast lowrider culture. Context, history, and site specificity are stressed in this writing, as well as in Elizabeth Mirabal's essay on The Museum of the Old Colony, an installation series by

artist Pablo Delano. Simultaneously critiquing the colonial notion of the archive and the museum, Mirabal's analysis lauds the artist's nuanced portrayal of the relationship between the island of Puerto Rico and the United States. Mirabal asserts this through images, objects, and ephemera, which Delano's installation presents as a clear yet complex portrait of the ideological framing of Puerto Rico from a colonial perspective. Finally, a reflective personal essay by Alex Santana on the influence of the late Cuban artist Ana Mendieta considers some of the artist's seminal works, while wondering how she would have responded to some of today's most pressing issues, if she were still alive. Although the five essays in this section vary greatly in subject matter, they ultimately reveal some truths about artistic thought and its ability to stimulate community, care, emotional intelligence, and collective autonomy.

The next section, **Architecture and Spatial Politics**, shares many of these overlapping themes, chief among them a creative impulse to effect radical change through imaginative means. From the adoption of American architect R. Buckminster Fuller's geodesic dome by Puerto Rican activists and artists from Loisaida (Lower East Side) to the pragmatic influence of German-born architect Henry Klumb in Puerto Rico—who like renowned Polish-born photographer Jack Delano, arrived to the archipelago and never left—there is a dialogue between Puerto Rico and its diaspora that manifests itself in a historical need to reclaim space for the urgent purpose of building community and care. For Guerron, the geodesic dome is a symbol that represents the hope of community organizers and artists in the neighborhood, led by the Puerto Rican activist group CHARAS in the 1970s and '80s. The dome would have a reprisal decades later, post-Hurricane Maria, as a sustainable, resilient response to devastating circumstances. Similarly, the architectural design principles of Klumb, as explained by Sebastián Meltz-Collazo, prioritize the Caribbean environment in a way that deconstructs the nonsensical imposition of colonial architecture in conflict with its adopted setting—not unlike Delano's curatorial practice. Like Fuller, who was also born around the turn of the 20th century, Klumb's influence echoes into the present, even as his original example no longer exists in a physical sense. A lingering presence is also found in the archival project Where We Were Safe, in which Marcos Echeverría Ortiz digitally maps the salsa music scene of the 1970s while supplementing this history with oral history interviews and other archival materials. Here, we have another love letter, in

this case, to a global musical movement that is slowly regaining traction, fittingly, in its birthplace, as new audiences rediscover and redefine the role of salsa in challenging the spatial politics of the city. Echverría Ortiz, in sharing insight into the process of developing his thesis project, hints at the possibility of salsa becoming more inclusive as groups like Las Mariquitas and Lulada Club now hold space for women-identified and LGBTQ+ salserxs at venues around the five boroughs. The connection between community spaces and music is also evident in Jorge Cruz's essay on queer Latinx nightlife in Los Angeles—a community that developed on the margins of the more mainstream scene in the city. Like their East Coast counterparts, Angelenxs look to the dance floor for a sense of liberation and intimacy mediated by the concepts of spatial entitlement and the brown commons. Once again, the impact of community arts is apparent through the work of artists who emerged from this L.A. scene, like rafa esparza and the late Chicana photographer Laura Aguilar, as well as Amina Cruz, whose image graces the cover of this volume. The landscape photography of Kale Doylen, along with GIS mapping tools, then offers a midwestern perspective on spatial politics. Her essay highlights the arrival of Mexican laborers to the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, the subsequent community established within segregated architecture, and the ongoing erasure of Black and Brown communities in the area. Here we reproduce text and images; however, it is important to note that like Where We Were Safe, this project is fully appreciated as a multimedia presentation.

In the final section, **Counternarratives and Activism**, Néstor David Pastor introduces a little known yet pioneering figure of the 20th century music industry, Ralph Perez, founder of Ansonia Records (est. 1949), a once family-owned Latin music record label that has since been revived, releasing its first album just last year after a 32-year hiatus. The thread of activism present throughout the book then crescendos into a comprehensive history of the Puerto Rico artist and activist collective AgitArte, which celebrates its 25th anniversary this year. Like Meltz-Collazo and Echeverría Ortiz, Laguarta Ramírez captures the parallel struggles of Puerto Ricans living on the archipelago and in communities throughout the northeast United States. Likewise, Neyda Martinez pens an ode to the New York chapter of the Young Lords grounded in the perspectives of former members like Mickey Melendez and Cleo Silvers, and poignantly graced by the photography of the late Hiram Maristany, in collaboration with the award-winning documentary film TAKEOVER (2022), which focuses on the campaign to save Lincoln Hospital and improve the overall quality of care for patients in low-income neighborhoods around New York City and beyond. This commitment to solidarity and direct action is also key to understanding Tanya K. Hernández's sharp critique of proposed revisions to the U.S. census that would unquestionably advance Black erasure. This is particularly disturbing at a time when Afro-Latinx representation has achieved an unprecedented level of visibility in recent years, thanks in no small part to the work of Bronx-based writer Janel Martinez and her award-winning platform, Ain't I Latina? Much like the reference to Sojourner Truth's famous speech, Martinez's essay finds commonalities among

the global African diaspora that manifests in a throughline of Afro-Latinx media representation vis-à-vis Black U.S. media from the mid-20th century to the present. In both cases, erasure is a catalyst for counternarratives that serve to reaffirm and renegotiate the undeniable need for blackness to remain at the forefront of any conversations around representation, agency, and liberation.

It is our sincere hope that Intervenxions remains attuned to the slow, careful, deliberate effort required to craft an informed yet accessible platform with universal appeal rooted in Latinx specificity, in a word, abundance. Because there are so many more threads to be unraveled, examined, and woven back together in unexpected ways, beginning with the essays in this collection. That is the experience of the reader, to whom we are eternally grateful.

Find us online at: **www.latinxproj.nyu.edu/intervenxions**

ART

CRITICISM

15

'CRUISING WITH RAF ESPARZA' CORPO RA TERRA CR

By Laura G. Gutiérrez

Corpo RanfLA: Terra Cruiser outside of Miami Beach Convention Center during Art Basel Miami 2022. Photo by Fabian Guerrero.

UTOPIA'
A
'S
NFLA:
RUISER[1]

(2022)

ART CRITICISM

'CRUISING UTOPIA'

"The anticipatory illumination of certain objects is a kind of potentiality that is open, indeterminate, like the affective contours of hope itself."

José Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*

During the afternoon of November 30, 2022, outside of the Miami Beach Convention Center, I witnessed a ceremonious ticket hand-off that, although a micro gesture, felt immensely significant: Los Angeles artist Gabriela Ruiz[2] placed a ticket on the cupped hands of fellow Angeleno artist Cauleen Smith[3] ever so gently. The ticket,[4] which was designed by Mexico City-born, New York-based fashion iconoclast and artist Víctor Barragán,[5] would give Smith access to ride *Corpo RanfLA: Terra Cruiser*, a repurposed and retrofitted coin-operated pony ride that had shapeshifted into a futuristic cyborg lowrider bike. The excess number of spokes were gold-plated and matched some of the other details of the kinetic sculpture: the four sets of feet—eight in total that simulate movement, as if swimming, dancing, or flying—were also golden, as were the chrome-plated sleeves worn by the artist behind *Corpo RanfLA*. Los Angeles multidisciplinary artist rafa esparza[6] used them while extending his arms to grab the outer parts of the front wheel's hub. esparza's lower half, in turn, was inside the lowrider bike's body. Other golden details included upward-swept handlebars, a chain-link wheel, and vanity side mirrors. The other dominant colors were the bright green and blue used to paint the cast of the bottom half with the four sets of flying golden feet attached, resembling some ancestral, mythical creature.

In case it is still not clear, esparza was in the entrails of this sculpture and would serve as Smith's guide on their journey. *Corpo RanfLA* had landed in Miami Beach, Florida[7] only a few hours before, hailing from some mythic-futuristic place—that we just might as well call East Los Angeles, California or Elysian Park—and was stationed outside of the Convention Center where Art Basel Miami Beach was taking place. Art Basel is one of the premier global art fairs where the main goal is to sell art. It is also known for its parties that draw celebrities, but other public engagement initiatives include conversations with artists, guided tours, educational opportunities for kids, and performances such as *Corpo RanfLA*, the reason I had flown to Miami last November.

With Ruiz's assistance and another of esparza's key collaborators on the project, fellow Angeleno and multidisciplinary artist Karla Ekatherine Canseco,[8] Smith mounted *Corpo RanfLA*. She was then asked to put on a set of brown wireless headphones through which she heard esparza's voice, who, in a quiet and almost whispering tone, recounted *Corpo RanfLA*'s story: where they came from and what the point of their joint mission would be.[9] In short, *Corpo RanfLA* had come back to the present from three hundred years in the future where they were part of the PLT/PLG (Para La Tierra / Para La Gente)[10] collective comprising revolutionary scientists, robotic engineers,

cholxs, lowriders, and environmental organizers whose varying degrees of expertise would innovate technology to heal the earth. Like all the other riders that afternoon, Smith had a previous connection to esparza. She was now part of the lowrider cyborg's communal enterprise: helping this shapeshifter safeguard the earth's scarce natural resources, particularly maíz (corn). For spectators, the only way they were able to apprehend the importance of this joint venture was via the performative ritual before them: the mounting, intent listening, dismount, and activation of the kinetic half human, half machine sculpture while Dr. Dre's "Let Me Ride" played through some speakers on the exterior grounds of the convention center, with its food and coffee trucks and scarce tables and chairs. The ritual went beyond the gesture of a simplistic "ride me" (or almost child-like) experience, which was made evident for some of us when Smith's gentle touch caressed esparza's bare back. But even if some missed this micro gesture, we all witnessed the care with which her legs hugged the cyborg body while sitting atop the souped-up velvety bike seat, a position that lasted as much as the recording, over a minute in length. Following the dismount, Smith received a kernel of corn and sent *Corpo RanfLA* on their way (i.e. with the help of esparza's assistants, she activated the kinetic sculpture), but she first had to whisper the password into Ruiz's ear, which she, as the other riders, heard in the last bit of the recording. And the kernel Smith and the other riders received was the seed that they/we had to plant, given *Corpo RanfLA*'s limitations for digging.

This gesture, this flipping of the script, if you will, is key for me in making sense of esparza's piece but may also apply to his work in general.[11] Whereas in customary cyborg fashion the human's abilities are enhanced by the mechanical or cybernetic characteristics of the cyborg, in *Corpo RanfLA: Terra Cruiser*, the cyborg's abilities are enhanced by the human(s) who aid in doing their part to plant seeds for the future. That is, esparza's powers are enhanced by shapeshifting into a lowrider cyborg bike, but the role of the people activating the cyborg through riding it and planting seeds asserts that human hands are irreplaceable. This understanding of human labor, including the hardships endured by racialized bodies, is consistent in esparza's artistic work. Mechanical and technological advances are important, as long as fellow human beings are right/riding alongside such advances. This coming together, this forging of human, mechanical, and technological powers for the betterment of our future was made manifest for the rider—and their importance in this venture—with the 'Me & You' beautiful gangster lettering on *Corpo RanfLA*'s rear end that Mario Ayala and Alfonso González Jr. had stylized. Again, in case it's not clear, this 'Me & You' could only be viewed from the rider's vantage point and made clear for the rider of this melding into one human-machine futuristic powerhouse, and that they/we were an essential part of the enterprise. As I watched from the queue, then from the vantage point of a rider, and lastly, from the sidelines while other fellow riders activated the lowrider cyborg, I kept thinking that *Corpo RanfLA* is "a doing of a here and now and an insistence on potentiality or concrete possibility for another world" (José Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*, 1).

As I previously alluded, I was on the queue to ride—with—the cyborg, right behind Smith, and spent most of the time in line conversing with her, our first time meeting in person. Given my proximity to her own participatory experience in the performance, Smith has become a sort of portal in my describing the performative aspects of

Whereas in customary cyborg fashion the human's abilities are enhanced by the mechanical or cybernetic characteristics of the cyborg, in *Corpo RanfLA: Terra Cruiser*, the cyborg's abilities are enhanced by the human(s) who aid in doing their part to plant seeds for the future. That is, esparza's powers are enhanced by shapeshifting into a lowrider cyborg bike, but the role of the people activating the cyborg through riding it and planting seeds asserts that human hands are irreplaceable. This understanding of human labor, including the hardships endured by racialized bodies, is consistent in esparza's artistic work. Mechanical and technological advances are important, as long as fellow human beings are right/riding alongside such advances.

Corpo RanfLA while I waited in line that November afternoon. Among some of the things we talked about was Smith's teaching at The California Institute of the Arts, where Canseco had been her student—she was beaming with pride for her former student who played an integral part in the building of *Corpo RanfLA*. We also briefly chatted about her recent move to UCLA, as well as the time she spent teaching at The University of Texas at Austin, my institutional affiliation. But more than anything we talked about our respective relationship to esparza and how we were feeling about the performance piece and our role in it. We were two of the dozen or so riders that rode *Corpo RanfLA* that afternoon, right behind or in front of me were other artists and art critics associated with Los Angeles: Carmen Argote, Janelle Zara, Marcel Monroy, and American Artist, among others; Ruiz and Canseco were invited to be the first and second riders, respectively. Without a doubt, it was a very Los Angeles crowd and vibe, and this was deliberate; as a temporary Los Angeles resident, I was feeling like an insider/outsider. The spectators (and of course, also the active participants of the performance) had already been cued to this brown Los Angeles assemblage of symbols, beginning with the title of the piece; that is, the last two letters in *ranfLA* that are purposely capitalized. But also, the word ranfla itself is a particularly pachuco slang term for car and in certain SoCal communities, it is simply understood to mean lowrider. The group of riders/performance participants who esparza and his team had gathered were Brown and Black, and mostly queer folk from the Los Angeles area. Again, all of this

was very intentional as esparza wrote for an Instagram post:

> This artwork was not open for the public to ride; instead, I chose the riders we invited to consider riding on my back which activated and brought the piece to full circle. It was important to prioritize this community of folks in a venue that inherently by its mere function of selling art makes it inaccessible to them.[12]

Corpo RanfLA: Terra Cruiser was commissioned by Los Angeles Times's *Image* magazine for Art Basel, part of the Meridians section curated by Magalí Arriola and in collaboration with esparza's gallery, Commonwealth and Council (Los Angeles / Mexico City). The material and institutional backing undoubtedly made possible esparza's latest performance/art piece. But as it is often the case with the artist, members of his brown queer artistic community were part of the creative process of *Corpo RanfLA*. To bring this piece to fruition, esparza spun an affective web bringing in the knowledge, expertise, and friendship of the aforementioned Ruiz, Canseco, Barragán, González, and Ayala, but also the queer Texas-based photographer Fabian Guerrero[13] and the multidisciplinary Los Angeles artist Guadalupe Rosales, well known for her Veteranas and Rucas[14] archive project. All of them played a pivotal part in the piece's creation, activation, and/or documentation. *Corpo RanfLA: Terra Cruiser* and esparza's community and family, both biological and chosen, had already made a public appearance via a suite of essays and images published in *Image* that served to first reveal the project days before it would be activated in Miami Beach.[15] One of these entries, a photo essay by the editors of *Image* with photography by legendary photographer Estevan Oriol[16] could be read as a pre-performance for the Miami Beach activation: the Mexican fashion designer and artist Bárbara Sánchez-Kane[17] outfitted esparza in a breathtaking sculptural white genderqueer dress, as he wore one of the golden chrome arm sleeves from the Miami Beach performance. A few members from his tight knit queer, brown artistic Los Angeles community also wore striking genderqueer and at times, post-apocalyptic punk outfits by Sánchez-Kane: Rosales, Canseco, and Timo Fahler. Other members of esparza's chosen family also joined: Ruiz, Paulina Lara, Anita Herrera, Maria Maea, and Franc Fernández, as well as his parents and

biological sister. All were stunningly captured by Oriol's lens in Elysian Park, alongside a brown lowrider car on loan from Michael Romero.

Conceptually *Corpo RanfLA: Terra Cruiser* is the result of esparza's ongoing explorations on gay cruising, Los Angeles lowrider culture, anthropomorphism, racialized and otherwise minoritized bodies, legacies of systemic colonial and capitalist oppressive forces, and how all of these intersect. *Corpo RanfLA: Terra Cruiser* was the second instance in which esparza transformed himself into a lowrider; the first time was in 2018 when he embodied a queer version of the infamous Gypsy Rose lowrider. And perhaps the reader has already noted from this essay's title that I am borrowing from the late queer performance theorist José Esteban Muñoz's *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*, specifically the epigraph, quotes, and general ideas. But whereas Muñoz's cruising denotes movement through the different temporal nodes of thought and queer art and performances and how these intersect, esparza's cruising is very much rooted not only in/on the body across temporalities, but also across different spaces, particularly those within the Los Angeles urban and brown space. As esparza himself wrote for the Los Angeles Time's *Image* magazine: "When I think about my art practice, I like to think of it as a practice that's cartographical, in the sense that it's charted—like how I experienced growing up in Los Angeles as a brown, queer first-generation person coming from a working-class family. All those intersections are very important."[18] In other words, there is a particular Los Angeles cartography that is being mapped out here

and to which we are invited to cruise as either participants or spectators. In very specific ways, as can already be noted, esparza uses his own body to bring forth—embody—two localized meanings of the term cruising, the lowrider cruising popularized by the Los Angeles Latinx car subcultures and gay cruising, particularly drawing from his own experiences of cruising in Elysian Park in the city. Just as in the earlier iteration of *Corpo Ranfla* from 2018, a transformation which Fabian Guerrero[19] documented—in addition to a photoshoot of esparza's queer embodiment of the lowrider car Gypsy Rose in Elysian Park—the artist was intent on troubling not only these concepts of cruising, but the spaces too. For the earlier instantiation of *Corpo Ranfla*, Ayala spray painted esparza's body in bright pink fashion as the infamous lowrider car from the 1960s. But instead of painting the burlesque dancer Gypsy Rose that adorned the hood of the original, esparza had Ayala depict the legendary Cyclona (aka Robert Legorreta) on his front torso and a homoerotic encounter between two brown *cholos* on his back.[20] The infamous roses painted on the sides of esparza's outer arms and legs, hair and nails by Tanya Meléndez (aka Nena Soul Fly), and a "Brown Persuasion" car club plaque, were the perfect compliments to activate *Corpo Ranfla* (2018), first in a photoshoot by Guerrero in Elysian Park, and then a live performance at the Mayan Theater with Sebastián Hernández.[21] Of the latest iteration, esparza has written:

"I wanted to tease some of those conflicting feelings that I had with lowrider car culture,"[22] which has traditionally been straight and masculine dominated, as well as muddling the already complex history of Elysian Park, which not only has a police academy shooting range, but a complicated history of displacement of brown, black, and poor folks."

Aesthetically, *Corpo RanfLA*'s troubling of space and time corresponds to the conceptual ideas the piece emits: it is queer, it is brown, it is about working-class modes of leisure and the beautification of everyday objects—from the coin operated pony rides outside of supermarkets to lowrider car subculture.

Without a doubt, there is a *rasquache* feel in the aesthetics of the kinetic sculpture and the performance, but I would like to suggest that Christina Sharpe's notion of "beauty is a method" can also be useful for apprehending esparza's *Corpo RanfLA*, and his work in general. In "Beauty is a Method," Sharpe writes how black aesthetics were a quotidian practice, a way in which a very specific notion of black beauty was cultivated in the domestic space through her mother's doings. But it's also about the knowledge Sharpe has gleaned from this to make the present more livable, and maybe even ponder possible new ways of being. Her essay begins: "I've been revisiting what beauty as a method might mean or do: what it might break open, rupture, make possible and impossible. How we might carry beauty's knowledge with us and make new worlds."[23] Sharpe is specifically discussing Black aesthetics, but I cannot help thinking about esparza's work, particularly considering the consistent ways in which he uses non-traditional art

materials and ideas and transforms them into art objects and experiences where everyday beauty is enhanced, from lowrider subculture practices to his work with adobe. The temporal window to the actual manufacturing of *Corpo RanfLA* can offer us a glimpse into this idea.

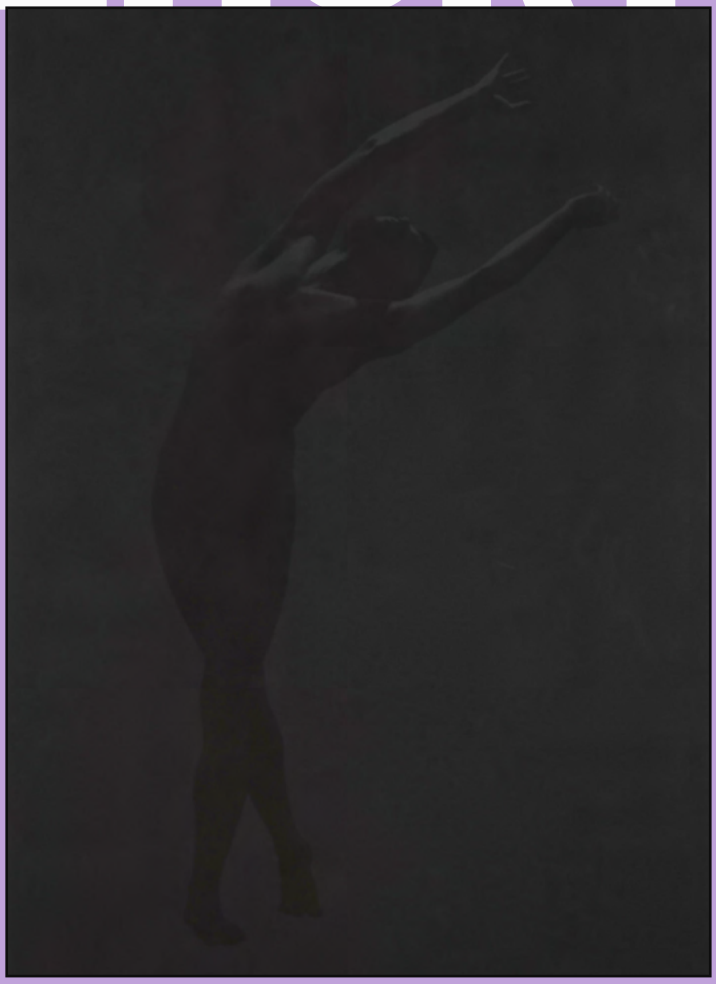
While building the kinetic sculpture, esparza and Canseco, who is the main collaborator for this segment of the piece, moved their center of operations from esparza's studio to his garage since the studio was not equipped for the needed voltage. Thus, working on a lowrider bike in an East L.A. garage brought a level of domesticity and Los Angeles urban brown aesthetics that the two, during those six weeks or so of working almost every day, might have not foreseen. As Canseco recounts, the neighbors were curious, they stopped by, they recognized the idea of two 'dudes' working on their vehicle in the garage, but simultaneously misrecognized as it was a lowrider bike with flying feet and a half-human torso from a cast, all very queer.[24] Coupled with this playfulness, a bonding took place between esparza and Canseco, a relationship that grew as they welded, casted, painted, talked, and shared ideas and space. *Corpo RanfLA* is thus imbued with the energy of both artists, particularly esparza's due to the ways in which his body and feet were cast for him to be able to occupy the entrails of the kinetic sculpture for the durational performance, which lasted over three hours that afternoon in Miami Beach. In her piece for *Image*, Canseco reflects on the transference of energy between the human and the non-human materials, but also on the ways in which an ancestral past and mythmaking has the potential for informing future myths. She writes:

If we made a myth for this sculpture—this creature that rafa is making—what has it inherited from rafa? What are the imprints that rafa left on it? What has it learned from him? And what does it know beyond him? We've been looking at different images of Aztec and Mayan references, these pre-Columbian, ceramic works. The thing we're making doesn't look that different from those things. There's kind of a lingering memory that's here and that's also beyond us, beyond time, that's being captured in this piece.[25]

The creation of something new, a new myth, made with the love, labor, and knowledge that's ancestral. As I have been writing, this reminds me of both Sharpe's "new worlds" and Muñoz's "queer utopia" but is also very specifically located in the present and future of the brown, queer, and urban landscape of Los Angeles.


1350022
1350021
rafa esparza
1350021
1350020
rafa esparza
1350020

ANIMATIN MEMORY:



Camilo Godoy, What did they actually see?, ("Possessed"), 2018.
Archival pigment print mounted on aluminum (printed 2021), 44 x 74 inches.
Courtesy of the artist and PROXYCO Gallery.

By **Clara María Apostolatos**

IG

AFFECTIVE TOUCH & CORPOREALITY IN THE WORK OF CAMILO GODOY AND CARLOS MARTIEL

ART CRITICISM

To visual artist Carlos Martiel, recording performance art is much like creating an archive.

"I consider my performance art like an archive in itself, in terms of its documentation. The photographic and video documentation becomes registered like an archive of the times I am living through, as well as an archive of the problems of the times I have had to live."[1]

In drawing out the relationship between archival and performance practices, Martiel invites us to consider how performances become transferred into physical records of the artist's creative practice as well as their political moment. While Martiel here speaks of archiving performances, his close friend, collaborator and visual artist Camilo Godoy is more interested in performing archives and the information disclosed in them.

"We can create new histories through performance, especially when considering the violence of history. There are so many events that have not been documented by photographs or video but live from accounts of oral histories—of people talking and describing what they experienced. To me, performance is a device that allows us to examine something that is never seen but maybe read or heard about."[2]

Together, the work of Godoy and Martiel capture the immediacy of generating and reanimating collective memory. Evoking the interrogative forms of the counter-archive, Godoy and Martiel question and disrupt conventional narratives of those historically

To me, performance is a device that allows us to examine something that is never seen but maybe read or heard about.

disenfranchised, among them the Latinx and queer community.[3] Rather than present objective or official views of history, the artists draw upon personal and cultural memory to offer subjective and contingent reports of history. The artists enact critical interrogations and revivals of past narratives through aesthetic strategies I heuristically describe here as affective touch and corporeality.

One of the most prominent aspects of Godoy's performances, photographs, and assemblages is the continuous processing of colonial and queer stories, their beginnings, and archival sources. For pieces like "Shock and Awe" (2002/2014) and "El Infiernito" (2006), Godoy recovered digital photos and videos from his past—those still and moving images that "hold a place in [his] hard drive and in [his] head"—to produce retroactive self-portraits of his child and adolescent self.[4] More recently, Godoy has turned to larger historical phenomena, archival practices, and their relation to official memory. His research manifests in various academic libraries and book collections such as the Columbia Rare and Special Collections library or the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, as well as the digital networks of information and visual culture.

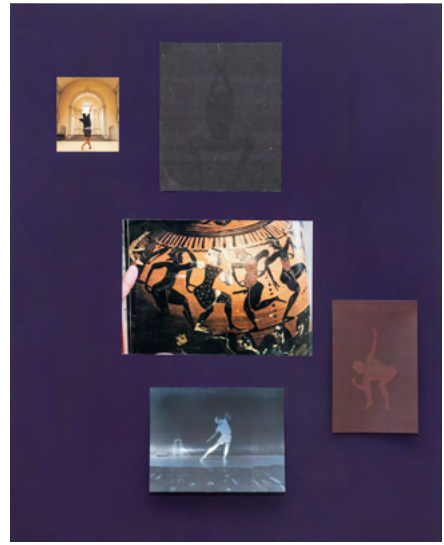
For Godoy, the unique modalities of performance art and dance allow him to draw a relationship between the moving body and the archive. For the recent photographic series *What Did They Actually See?*, Godoy studied 17th to 19th century texts and anthropological reports written by Christian missionaries that describe ritual dances performed by Indigenous people of the Americas as out of control, possessed, barbaric, deviant, and demonic.[5] Godoy performed and photographed the annotated dance practices as a way to "imagine, rather than reimagine, what was seen." The dark images recreate the context of ceremonies performed at night, often near a blazing fire. Through photography Godoy demonstrates the colonial gaze and, in this sense, he *animates* the archive by attaching movement and image to the written accounts of ceremony and ritual. Recasting the so-called deviant and barbaric dances into celebratory and vital movements, Godoy's re-enactments operate as a form of recuperation and reclamation of colonial narratives. The dim prints, which at first appear like monochromatic black pictures, carry a second, optic characteristic: upon further observation, the viewer's eyes adapt to the dark images, making it easier to perceive the artist's body caught in dynamic poses. The visual effect emblematizes how active contemplations of the past may allow suppressed or inverted histories to emerge out of the dark.

Martiel's "Muerte Al Olvido" (Death to Oblivion) (2018) similarly engages with the material records of colonialism but specifically those artifacts and items of cultural heritage that bear witness to the history of dispossession in Africa. For his residency at the University of Maryland

Art Gallery in 2018, Martiel visited the Department of Art History and Archeology's permanent collection and picked out four works from Cameroon, the Republic of Congo, and South Africa—countries that together make up 32% of Martiel's DNA ancestry. One of the pieces, a wildebeest head sculpture, was reproduced in marble. In effect, a Cameroonian artifact was recast in the Western mode of marble sculpture and placed at the center of the gallery space; as Martiel lays in the corner, buried under the scraps of the reconstruction. The marble debris symbolically indexes colonial powers' extraction of resources and cultural heritage in Africa—a continent that was similarly fragmented and its people displaced through colonization. Organized in this way, the site-specific piece draws an oblique equation between western colonial expansion, the looting of African cultural heritage, and Martiel's diasporic ancestry.

African objects are often displayed in Western museums in clusters on wall-mounted glass cases, while marble sculptures are raised by pedestals. Adopting the museum's conventional methods of display, the exhibition calls attention to the art institution's cultural and material hierarchies of value. Martiel's body—an entirely separate, third medium—and his transatlantic heritage fit uncertainly in the equation of the museum. Significantly, the viewer looks down at Martiel who cowers in the protective fetal position. The exhibition draws a symbolic relationship between the disarticulation of African objects from their original context, and Martiel's disjointed connection with his ancestry.

If *What did they actually see?* implies an empowered reclaiming of colonial accounts, then "Muerte al Olvido" expresses the immobilizing weight of systemic oppression and exploitation. Godoy's series of still photographs present choreographed movements caught in vibrant poses while Martiel's live performance features his immobilized body. These works share a joint method of working with historical objects and testimonials, taken from two institutions of memory: Godoy works from the colonial textual archive, and Martiel performs within the museum which operates as the official repository for cultural memory. Moreover, both explore the archive of coloniality using their own bodies, thereby alluding to the corporeality of memory and resistance. The corporeal properties of their art exemplify a form of restorative intimacy with the past that is visceral, physical, and affiliative.



For the ongoing project *Choreographic Studies* (2013-), Godoy searches our global cultural heritage in order to rethink and debunk erasures of queerness and indigeneity in history. He sources visual representations of sexual gatherings and dances in art history books and publications; and in the process, he creates his own

collection of queer imagery transferred as Xeroxes, transparencies, or archival pigment prints. For these reproductions of queer imagery, Godoy photographs his hands touching the edges of the images. Alluding to the presence of flesh and touch, his tactile intervention reverberates the corporeal imagery pictured in the queer dances. This gesture is at once a declaration of queer presence and a reenactment of queer intimacy, which has historically been and often still is vulnerable to abuse and violence. Significantly, Godoy's archival self-construction, which we could read as a retelling of the history of visual culture, undermines false narratives about the absence of queer populations in history and visual culture, and locates an alternative view by recovering the visual testimonies of queerness. *Choreographic Studies* therefore literalizes the process of building a counter-archive.

This series also illustrates that conventional archives are not in all unhelpful for drawing out counter-histories. Even conventional archives contain overlooked materials of neglected or obscured stories. Mounted on purple cork boards with pins and tape for Godoy's exhibition "El Infiernito" at Proxyco Gallery in 2022, *Choreographic Studies* recalls that history is a shared project embedded in our present moment: the telling and retelling of history is an ongoing process. This idea of history as a shared project is also expressed in Godoy's collaborative approach to art production: he frequently invites friends, including Martiel, to take part in his art (whether by participating in choreographed performances or photographed to produce new material for "Choreographic studies") and as such are involved in his counter-archiving processes and products. In effect, Godoy gives space and primacy to queer intimacy and sociability in his counter-archive construction. The photographic reproduction is an iterative gesture that parallels the processes of relaying history. Godoy's gesture of *touching* the archive suggests a more generative alternative to conventions of mining and extracting materials from the archive: his light-handed touch highlights the corporeality and intimate sociability encompassed in these images. As such, the piece marries past and contemporary visual vocabulary of queer intimacy.

From here we may consider how visual and action art may engage with principles of counter-archiving by employing alternative modes of knowledge production that oppose memory erasure and, in effect, revive discussions about history. For "Continente" (2017), nine diamonds were inserted into the skin of Martiel. A white American man removed the diamonds and placed them inside a box, leaving Martiel wounded and bleeding in the gallery space for several minutes. Like other examples of Martiel's endurance art, "Continente" involves an intensive and extremely painful undertaking for Martiel, who embodies in his performances the historical violence and structural oppression of diasporic people. Martiel's body becomes a metaphor whereby the wounds inflicted on him evoke colonial violence and resource extraction. This conceptual gesture echoes sociologist Anat Ben-David's design of the counter-archive as an engagement with "alternative modes of knowledge production that re-open the discussion about what is public knowledge; it is provocation and resistance.[6]

Following this formulation of the counter-archive, Martiel and Godoy exploit the unique capacities of art to actively contribute to the telling and retelling of history. Together, their works exemplify how counter archives and their processes

of assembly aid in the recuperation of incomplete accounts of history. Significantly, these works make clear that the archive functions not simply as a source of information but as an origin of counter-memory. Godoy and Martiel invite us to think of the archive as more than a monolithic institution but rather as a privileged site from which agents may unsettle and provoke conventional narratives.

Accordingly, when Godoy and Martiel transform history into palatable and embodied forms, they reassign histories of oppression and erasure into an aesthetics of commemoration. They share a recourse to a sensorial aesthetics of memory that is anchored by movement, corporeality, and affective touch. That is, both artists infuse history with visceral sentiment and, in effect, give body to memory. These visual registers allow us to historicize and see differently, to interrogate the past through the lens of queer intimacy and modes of affiliation.[7]

Like other examples of Martiel's endurance art, "Continente" involves an intensive and extremely painful undertaking for Martiel, who embodies in his performances the historical violence and structural oppression of diasporic people. Martiel's body becomes a metaphor whereby the wounds inflicted on him evoke colonial violence and resource extraction.

LOVE LETTER

By **Alex Santana**

Imágen de Yágul, 1973. Color photograph.

TO ANA MENDIETA

ART CRITICISM

I first encountered Ana Mendieta's work in 2009, when I was a junior in high school. Those were the early days of Tumblr, and my feed presented me with images of many contemporary artists, almost always without their names. They were simply reblogged images, compelling and mysterious and cool. I didn't know it at the time, but the image seared into my memory was *Imagen de Yagul*, from Mendieta's *Silueta* series (1973–77), and it struck me: the contours of a human body, lying within a cavity of a rock formation, with protruding wildflowers framing limbs and torso, obscuring the face. I was used to seeing so many images of people's faces––these were still the early days of Facebook after all––and Mendieta's work challenged that impulse of representation for me. How liberating: in *Imagen de Yagul*, the face is irrelevant. The image seemed to be about something beyond us as individuals, about the boundary between life and death, of a human body buried among something much older and larger than itself, supported and surrounded by tender, flowering life.

Years later, I would re-encounter Mendieta's work during a particular moment of adolescent sadness. I was thinking a lot about death, as well as ideas of empathy, vulnerability, and ephemerality. This time, I learned the artist's name and studied her biography, which utterly shocked me. The circumstances around her traumatic childhood displacement, her sensation of non-belonging in the US, and her investigations into violence and complicity drew me in. The work felt uncharacteristically familiar to me, as if I had finally found a visual artist whose work managed to carry the wounds and subsequent scarring of everyday life, especially for those facing gendered and racialized violence. I fervently studied Mendieta's images and short videos––whatever I could find online––and I admit, I became quite obsessed. During this time, the power of her work began to challenge that debilitating feeling of melancholic emptiness I could not let go of in my own life. How beautiful and grand it seemed, to be a body amongst a landscape, within and a part of a much broader, seemingly infinite ecosystem.

Mendieta's work is radical because she encourages humans to bridge that estrangement between the natural world and modern living.

One of her work's most essential characteristics is proximity to and intimacy with the ground. In *Burial Pyramid* (1974), Mendieta's body is covered almost entirely by large rocks. Slowly, her body breathes deeply, over and over again, shifting and tumbling some of the rocks, allowing other parts of her body to emerge. The earth moves with her, in concentrated, meditative motion, although the site itself is grave-like. The human spirit, channeled through the breath, is a vital force in this activation. I am reminded of petrichor, the pleasant smell that fills the air following rainfall. Someone once told me this sweet, fragrant scent of wet earth evokes a feeling of nostalgia for humans, specifically that of our mother's womb.

On the occasion of Ana Mendieta's posthumous 1987 retrospective at the New Museum, Marcia Tucker wrote, "Many of her outdoor works were often ephemeral and connected to the earth, subjected to its natural changes. I am not sure that they were intended at all for a museum's neutral, interior walls, but that is the only way now to view them."[1] I inherently disagree with this perspective. I no longer believe museums are neutral. I also don't believe in one-directional, traditional viewership. I think Mendieta's work encourages a different kind of active engagement, beyond the singularity of her artistic authorship. Mendieta once wrote in an artist statement: "The viewer of my work may or may not have had the same experience as myself. But perhaps my images can lead the audience to [speculate] on their own experiences [of] what they might feel I have experienced. Their minds can then be triggered so that the images I present retain some of the quality of the actual experience."[2] I began to seek out the actual experience.

The first time I laid naked on the soil, I felt the wetness of moss against my skin, a cold drop of dew sliding down my leg, the ticklish crawl of an ant on my wrist. I felt for a second that my body was not truly my own, but rather, just another organism of the forest. I noticed the rhythm of my own breath, cooling me off and calming me down. It was late summer, and at that moment I felt that I had never really experienced summer before--at least not like this, fully. Inspired by Ana Mendieta's encouragement, I wrestled with and finally came to accept the emotions that flooded over me. I began to cry, and it felt good. The warm smell of the soil also helped with this process, as did the leaves moving in the wind, the insects, and the flickering sunlight.

There is one photograph from Mendieta's *Tree of Life* (1976) exploration that haunts me. She stands against a huge, majestic tree with arms outstretched over her head, covered in mud. The lower half of her body is obscured by grasses along

Mendieta often spoke of the metaphor of the root: the dynamic force of nature that nurtures and provides a matrilineal inheritance. Expansive, underground, and bustling, like a nascent social movement or a mycelial web. Or perhaps like gunpowder laid on the sand, still dormant yet volatile, embodying the possibility of entropic cataclysm, greater than its current state.

a natural embankment. Along the edge of this earth wall we witness the web of roots that support this tree, energetically unfurling towards us. When a plant in the earth dies from winter frost, its stem and foliage wither. Its roots, however, remain buried in the soil—a vibrant, active network in symbiotic relationship with many other species of insects, bacteria, and fungi, among other friends. Even as the plant dies, the roots remain vital, slowly decaying in the soil and providing life-giving nutrients to those who feed from them. Mendieta often spoke of the metaphor of the root: the dynamic force of nature that nurtures and provides a matrilineal inheritance. Expansive, underground, and bustling, like a nascent social movement or a mycelial web. Or perhaps like gunpowder laid on the sand, still dormant yet volatile, embodying the possibility of entropic cataclysm, greater than its current state.

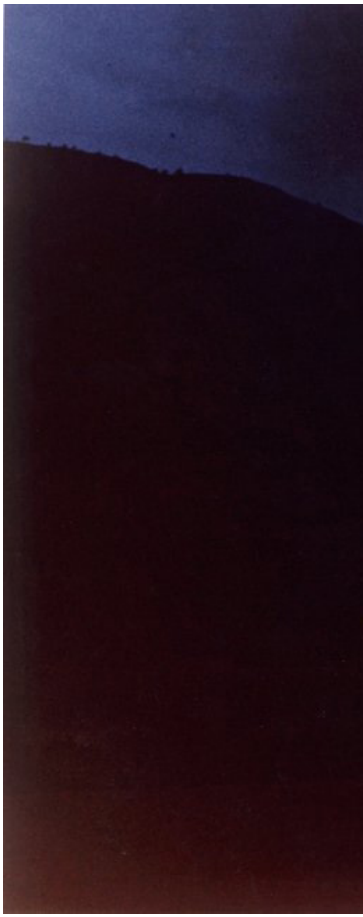
Mendieta's insistence on ephemerality is a core, radical aspect of the work. Many of her artworks no longer physically exist, but rather exist simply as documentation of a moment in time, through images, both moving and still. In 1976, Ana Mendieta made *Silueta de Cohetes*, in which a figure built with arms outstretched is made of fireworks that light up against a night sky. A critic in 1980 described the work as "both beautiful and frightening as the flames sway in the air. The viewer is encouraged to become emotionally consumed in the exhilaration of the flames."[3] I have written about fire in the past, primarily its philosophical and spiritual associations, and about the element's significance for humanity. I think sometimes I harbor pyromaniacal tendencies, and understand how easy it is to become emotionally consumed. *Silueta de Cohetes* is a series of moving images that reminds us of the formidable potentiality within ourselves, playing with the notion of time, the lie of its scarcity, and the promise of its relentless circularity.

Ana Mendieta's 1981 video *Ochún* features two ridges made of sand that form a channel through which water flows. These two sculptural walls allude to the curvaceous forms of the human body and do not remain stagnant. The pressure and movement of water from the current informs the curvature of the lines, and the sun's rays create twinkling reflections in the moving water. In this video, one life force affects the form of another, implying a relationship in motion over time. Mendieta filmed this video off the coast of Key Biscayne, Florida, nodding towards the border (or body of water) that divides nations and ideologies, including that of her Cuban homeland and her subsequent exiled home in the US.

This love letter ends with Mendieta's *Esculturas Rupestres* (1981), or rock sculptures, carved into the side of a limestone wall in the forests of Jaruco in Cuba. In these relief sculptures, feminine bodily forms allude to zemis, or Taíno deities that preside over storms, the wind, and the moon, among other natural forces. Guabancex, the supreme storm deity of the Taíno people, is depicted by Mendieta with an almost heart-shaped form, including an incision implying a vaginal chasm and arms that fold into themselves as if they were wings. Due to erosion and lack of maintenance, like so many of her other works, Mendieta's *Esculturas Rupestres* no longer remain in the physical landscape, and have deteriorated over time. Nevertheless, these "resonant indentations" represent monumental strength and effort on the part of the artist, pointing to what the late scholar José Esteban Muñoz described as "another way of desiring, of feeling, or radiating a value that resists accumulation and ownership."[4] This is another nod of

encouragement found in Mendieta's work: resistance to ownership, or to the idea that the land, this earth beneath our feet, can ever be "owned." We are simply stewards (at our best) or invasive species (at our worst). Even the artwork in nature can never truly be "owned," in Mendieta's case. All that remains are images––beautiful, haunting ones––reminding us of the ephemerality of everything around us, including ourselves.

If Ana Mendieta were still alive today, she would be 74 years old. I have so many questions: What would her work look like after the advent of the internet? What would her relationship to Cuba be like today? What would she think about the state of the current climate catastrophe? What would she think of today's art world, completely decentralized, hyper-capitalist, accelerated to an absurd degree? How steadfast would her belief in art be, today? Would she still be curating exhibitions? What might a contemporary version of *Dialectics of Isolation* look like?[5] What would she think about the state of white feminism today? How would she respond to the ephemeral works of Cecilia Vicuña? Or the sculptures of Simone Leigh?[6] Would she still be a part of an artist community in New York City, or would she have moved elsewhere? What would her dreams for the future be, in 2023? There are so many questions to be asked.



ESTRANGE
RESTLESS
AND RUPT

Installation view. Introductory wall, *The Museum Desk*, and video: *They Don't Need Any Passport* | 2020–2022. *The Museum of the Old Colony*, Duke Hall Gallery of Fine Art, 2022.

By **Elizabeth Mirabal**

EMENT,
SNESS,
TURE:

PABLO DELANO AND THE RETHINKING OF PUERTO RICO

ART CRITICISM


Young Hunters in Puerto Rico
DONOHUE

Yo sabré siempre quererte, como llorar tus pesares...

Lola Rodríguez de Tió, *A Puerto Rico*, 1893[1]

The Museum of the Old Colony: An Art Installation by Pablo Delano was hosted by the Duke Hall Gallery of Fine Art at James Madison University from February 1 to March 26, 2022.[2] Curated by art historian Laura Katzman, this conceptual exhibition addresses how the U.S. "territory" of Puerto Rico—a Caribbean archipelago—has been represented in 20th-century archival photographs, media images, tourist objects, historical artifacts, and films. It has recently been memorialized in a new eponymous book—the first to extensively document and interpret Delano's open-ended, multimedia installation. Five insightful and well-researched essays by Katzman, Laura Roulet, Amanda Guzmán, César Salgado, and Beth Hinderliter, a foreword by Marianne Ramírez Aponte, and a 3-D visualization by Ángel Garcia, Jr. offer illuminating aesthetic, historical, anthropological, and political perspectives from which to view *The Museum of the Old Colony* and grasp its many implications.[3] This impressive publication has inspired me, a writer on Caribbean literature and culture, to meditate even more deeply on Delano's performative project—itself a meditation on museums and archives—which intellectually and emotionally drew me into its compelling universe from the moment I entered the exhibition space.

Delano, a visual artist and photographer born in San Juan and based in Hartford, Connecticut, simultaneously reconstructs and challenges the imperialist vision of Puerto Rico after the Spanish-Cuban-American War of 1898—occasionally including other islands such as Cuba, Hawai'i, and the Philippines. *The Museum of the Old Colony* evokes André Malraux's concept of a "museum without walls," which emphasizes the value of photography in broadening the scope of art collections (and by extension its power to perpetuate myths and stereotypes). Relatedly, the artist subversively plays with the representation of the "other," as created by Western anthropological and ethnographic institutions whose displays have rationalized the "right" of imperial powers to subjugate peoples they have conquered and attempted to control. Yet *The Museum of the Old Colony* is nomadic in nature, characterized by itinerant movement and flexibility, changing shape and thus accruing new meanings as it adapts to each new space that hosts it.[4] (Ironically, while this fictive museum critiques museums, it also belongs to one; an earlier version of the installation is part of the permanent collection of the Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Puerto Rico.)

As the most extensive iteration of *The Museum of the Old Colony* to date, the Duke Gallery venue gave expansive breadth to Delano's satirical mimicking of the role of collector. His selective appropriation and repurposing of "found objects," purchased memorabilia, and historical photographs

tells a cultural story about his native country through the critical gaze of an insider. For the artist, the chronology of Puerto Rico is not marked by historical milestones, but rather by the evolution of a manufactured commodity fraught with associations of the colonizer and the colonized: the Old Colony soft drink, whose name Delano uses to title his installation in a Proustian moment of confession. With wry humor, we learn that the artist himself drank this sweet yet unhealthy beverage as a child growing up on the island.

Everything in this installation is multilayered, each tableau containing a cacophony of voices. In one of the stations, "At the Crossroads," chaos arises, as a Buddha doll, an American B-52 toy airplane, a jar of Vicks VapoRub ointment, and several elements of Afro-Cuban religion—Santería necklaces and The Infant of Prague—refer to a mixed and transcultural reality where foreign, imported, or outsider influences mingle with native traditions, all recontextualized in a space marked by the heterogeneity that nurtures Puerto Rican identity.[5] This ensemble is animated by an echo chamber where all voices resonate, in a clear effort to appeal to a collective yearning around the national trauma of a never-reached independence.

An exploration of mourning is a recurring leitmotif—a critical evocation of loss and striving that can be traced across Puerto Rico's history in the twentieth century. This journey becomes an antidote to the erasure of countless narratives torn between resistance and assimilation.

Throughout the exhibition, Delano enlarges his photographs (or scans) of the original photographs and captions he appropriates, reproducing fragments of iconographies and discourses recovered from books, newspapers, magazines, press releases, albums, and catalogs, among other sources he acquires. This compels viewers to confront a reality of domination that exudes psychic and symbolic violence. From these visual and textual excerpts of a controversial colonial corpus, Delano makes it impossible for spectators to look away from images of the 1898 era, such as "An Outing"—one of the saddest and most enraging photographs in the entire ensemble—in which a naked Puerto Rican boy climbs a palm tree, while North American tourists in the shade drink the refreshing water from the cocos he has retrieved for them. Laura Katzman analyzes this image in relation to a more modern photograph using similarly demeaning tropes of a decently dressed yet barefoot coquero performing the same activity at a luxury hotel. Such "provocative juxtapositions" show how colonialism persists even as Puerto Rico

has modernized and gained some political autonomy since the 1950s.[6] As the artist stated in "The Decolonial Paintbox: Three Projects 1996-2021," a talk he delivered at Trinity College in October 2021: "Colonialism is not just a historical concept when you live it." This speaks not only to Delano's empathy for what Susan Sontag has termed "the pain of others," but also to his palpable sorrow about his own lived experience of the tragic colonial condition.

Delano is not interested in presenting a one-dimensional picture of Puerto Rico; on the contrary, the imagery and objects he employs form a kaleidoscope that encompasses Puerto Ricans of Taíno, African, and Spanish heritage. Images of dark-skinned children naked or in rags who stand at the edge of the ocean waiting to be "saved" by the invisible U.S. "savior" contrast with depictions of more privileged Puerto Ricans of White, Spanish descent in "A Porto Rican Family." But upper-class elites do not escape the colonizer's "othering." The installation delineates a map in which Puerto Ricans represent figures who—even when created from stereotype and masquerade such as the legendary jíbaros—describe the myriad essences of a national character. Indeed, Delano features a diverse set of Puerto Rican figures—real and imagined—on equal terms. Nationalist revolutionary Lolita Lebrón; Yaucono coffee mascot Mamá Inés; San Juan mayor Felisa Rincón de Gautier (doña Fela); Miss Puerto Rico of 1952, Helga Monroig; and a Puerto Rican Barbie doll all coexist in his museum not to promote a hierarchy of significance but rather as true counterpoints to generate dialogue and debate.

Perhaps because many of Delano's memories of Puerto Rico belong to his early years and adolescence, he emphasizes the presence of childhood. Boys and girls appear "used" and "reused" in colonial iconography as analogies for the "abandoned island," in need of shelter, protection, and guidance. Images of destitute children transition to those of impoverished young women who must be "rescued" and to photographs of sexualized teenage beauty queens and women objectified in other ways. The exhibition can thus be read from the perspective of a gendered infantilization of Puerto Rico; the archipelago emerges as vulnerable not unlike small children and stereotyped women. The merging of gender and infantilization also occurs in the tableau of the male toy soldiers marching among the colonizer's literature on Puerto Rico—reinforcing the militarization of the "territory" under U.S. rule. The recontextualization of objects associated with childhood play provokes in viewers feelings of estrangement, restlessness, and rupture, which, in turn, invite us to reflect on the macabre underside of what at first seems familiar, naïve, or innocuous.

A work like "A Once Sleepy Colony" calls to mind the presumed passivity of Puerto Rico in its attempts to become independent—a theme represented by the educational toy "Soft and Safe Hispanic Family" with its "squeezable" plastic dolls. Such passivity is countered by Nationalist action, as seen in images of Puerto Rican independence fighters and the state forces that repressed their uprisings. With Delano's recovery of these heroic stories, the artist weaves together seemingly contradictory threads of Puerto Rican history, which center around the coexistence of nationalistic feeling with the reality of massive migrations to the U.S. continent. Delano highlights historic and contemporary realities for Puerto Rico, where escalating economic crises and ever more deadly and frequent natural disasters continue to condition mass exodus. As

Yomaira Vázquez-Figueroa reminds us, the year 2015 marked a historic moment in Puerto Rico's migration history because at that time there were officially more Puerto Ricans living in the U.S. than on the island.[7] (This was only exacerbated by Hurricane Maria in 2017.) Delano's preoccupation with this issue is expressed more elaborately in a new work entitled "The Jet Blue Solution," from his recent exhibition *cuestiones caribeñas/caribbean matters* at Trinity College's Widener Gallery.[8] Against a photograph of a parade float sanctioned by the government to commemorate the emancipation of enslaved Africans in Puerto Rico, Delano places a Jet Blue airline toy plane, poised for takeoff, presumably to the U.S. This suggests tensions between different kinds of "freedom" that have coexisted in the "Free Associated State" of Puerto Rico—tensions that continue to influence the destinies of Puerto Ricans on the island and in the diaspora.

The Museum of the Old Colony, however, stays mostly in Puerto Rico—with its historic plantations, beaches, and oceans, and its more urban spaces—the incipient city found in images of home interiors and neocolonial "precincts" such as banks, hotels, and militarized enclaves. "The Museum Desk" is one such enclave; it turns the viewers' gaze on the colonizer—the imagined 1898-era military occupant of the desk, replete with his colonial books, artifacts, and instruments of measuring and photographing "*our islands and their people*." Delano's incisive scrutinizing of this desk analogizes it to an operating table par excellence—a site from which imperial ideologues "dissect" colonized Caribbean islands as part of the latter's activity of total appropriation.

Regarding the feeling of dislocation—as much emotional as geographic—*The Museum of the Old Colony* meditates on the vicissitudes of Puerto Rico confronting imperialist power, appealing to shared codes and references that orbit around frustration and distress. The insidiousness of such power is embedded in the books on display, which reek with the language of empire. *Our Islands and Their People* (1899), for example, intended to answer the question: "Cuba, Porto Rico, and the Isle of Pines; the Hawaiian group, the Philippine Islands—embracing territory large enough for an Empire—what of their topography, geography, their agricultural, mineral and other resources?" Likewise, a children's volume, *Our Little Porto Rican Cousin* (1902) asks: "The beautiful island of Porto Rico lies, as you will see by looking at the map, near that great open doorway to North America and the United States which we call the Gulf of Mexico. Very near it looks, does it not?" The emphasis in both texts on the geographic richness and geopolitical proximity to the North American continent reveals the deployment of complex tools of cultural domination as pillars of the 19th-century U.S. doctrine of Manifest Destiny.

The presence in Delano's exhibition of other (historically) colonized territories in the Caribbean, such as Cuba, and those in the Pacific like Hawai'i and the Philippines, points to the respective colonial experiences of these regions. The artist highlights the tragedy of his own homeland but without disregarding the history it shares with other countries of the Global South. One instance of this connection emerged for me, as a Cuban, when looking at the installation's images of the red, white, and blue Puerto Rican flag. Because most of the photographs in the exhibition are black and white, at first glance I mistook the Puerto Rican flag for the Cuban flag, which has a similar design and the same colors. In black and white, the flags seem conflated, perhaps a symbol of the intimate cultural and

historical links between these Caribbean islands—"two wings of one bird"—to quote Rodríguez de Tió's 1893 famous poem, "To Cuba." Moreover, I learned, coincidentally, that a black and white version of this mournful patriotic symbol was created by the anonymous artist collective *La Puerta* as an expression of struggle, resistance, and independence. This was in 2016, in sharp response to the U.S. Congress' approval of the Puerto Rico Oversight, Management, and Economic Stability Act (PROMESA), which put the island's troubled economy under the control of an external fiscal board.

Many are the memorable images of this exhibition. However, one that haunts my mind is "Flores Colón-Colón of Puerto Rico, A U.S. Air Cadet," a volunteer or draftee in the military during World War II, who points out his country on a map, which indicates Puerto Rico's strategic usefulness to the U.S. in fighting the fascist regimes then terrorizing Europe. The layers of power dynamics suggested by this photograph oscillate between certainty (as the trainee points with precision) and bewilderment at a presumed recognition (his and ours) of the irony of his position. Rescuing and recontextualizing such distressing images, Delano creates a conceptual installation of aesthetic complexity and emotional weight—one that speaks to the urgent need to confront an uncomfortable past and to face its relevance in the present. With humor, subversiveness, and formal rigor, *The Museum of the Old Colony* encourages serious contemplation of Puerto Rico by calling attention to the multilayered archives of visual culture that invite a critical rethinking of this Caribbean island.

MUJERES SUBVERSI

By Julianne Chandler

Lady in the Leaves, 2021. Dani Coca. Courtesy of the artist.

IVAS

BOLIVIAN AND DIASPORIC FEMINIST ART AND ACTIVISM

ART CRITICISM

To be Latinx is to be in constant combat. We fight against the hierarchies that exclude us and the ones built within us. Just like fruit, we bear the violent histories of dehumanizing labor and exploitation that continue to nurture the oppressor. The exportation of our fruits, like the battle, is eternal.

Natalia Barrientos, photographer

The illustration "Papa Imilla" (Imilla Potato) by Bolivian feminist illustrator and printmaker Adriana Herbas depicts two women locked in an embrace, their bodies suspended upside down, womb-like, under the surface of the earth. The figures are encased in roots, their long braids descending ever deeper underground. Upon closer inspection the braids themselves are made of intertwined potatoes—the "imilla" variety commonly used in soups and traditional meals in the Andes. Imilla is also the colloquial word for young woman in the Quechua language, a term used widely across the Central Andes of Bolivia and Peru. In an oppositional contrast, the bodies of the women are black, their figures outlined in the same clay color that makes up the earth they are encased within. As is typical of Adriana's style,[1] the figures' hands and feet are heavily lined and pronounced, a representation of the callused hands and feet of Indigenous women in the Andes. As the potato roots reach the surface of the earth, they explode into the deep violet flowers of the papa imilla plant, a color that adorns the Andean countryside during the fall harvest in the agricultural cycle, just after the rainy season.

Adriana's illustration adorns the cover of the book *Rajadura: Anthology of Lesbian and Bisexual Poetry*, edited by Ros Amils and published by Tijeras Combativas. "Las imillas," writes Adriana on her Instagram page, "emerge from ukhupacha," a Quechua word that refers to the underworld in Andean cosmology. "They have shifted the earth and furrowed the paths so that the water can run, and with their kiss las Indias have made the earth flourish. May love between women nurture life, history, and rebellion." Rajadura, the title of the poetry collection, connotes a crack, gash, or tear: a wound, a place of pain, but also power, potential, healing.

The enthralling work of Adriana Herbas is one expression of feminist artistic praxis in the Andes and Andean diaspora, part of a growing movement that fuses feminist and queer activism with elements of Indigenous identity, critique of patriarchy, and colonial rupture. As a Quechua-descendant artist that exists on the periphery between urban and rural livelihoods—Adriana's family are farmers and she lives both in the city and the campo—her work draws on the ancestral lineage of Indigenous women torn from the earth and displaced from their territory, an ongoing rajadura that disrupted/disrupts

innumerable generations of knowledge and thrusts that wisdom into trauma and clandestinity. In her book *The Extractive Zone: Social Ecologies and Decolonial Perspectives*, the scholar Macarena Gómez-Barris asks what it would look like if we tuned into the fragments of that knowledge. Gómez-Barris employs decolonial, feminist, and queer epistemologies—what she calls *submerged perspectives*—to explore the potential for crafting alternative modes of being and relating that confront the destructive forces of extractive capitalism.

Drawing from conversations with four Bolivian and Bolivian American artists about their artistic praxes, I expand Gómez-Barris's submerged perspectives—an effort to see through to the other side of colonial capitalism—and pose a positionality of subversion. The work of the artists featured here all pulls from the thread of the colonial afterlife in different forms, manifest in works of illustration, photography, performance art, collage, and printmaking that interrogate themes of patriarchy, gender and sexuality, and Indigeneity. All four of these artists endeavor to make a living from their artistic practice while also challenging conventional notions of what art is and does, especially within the context of the conservative and religious value systems that dominate Bolivian society both locally and transnationally. The works of Adriana Herbas (Cochabamba), Dani Coca (New Jersey), Malena Rodríguez Garcia (Cochabamba), and Natalia Barrientos (Houston-Tarija) engage themes of identity, the body, and displacement. In expanding the creative and territorial boundaries of Bolivian art forms, these artists also blur false binaries between rural and urban, North and South, center and periphery, Indigenous and mestizo, departing from a place of self-identification and personal experience that complicates such totalizing narratives. "My artistic work is trenzado (braided, intertwined) with my political work," says Adriana, "dialoguing and constructing always from a first-person perspective that reflects where I'm from: the earth, the female body, my [women's] collective. My rage." Operating from a subversive perspective, the works discussed here are generative, disobedient, and life affirming, inviting us to peel back the rajadura of patriarchy and coloniality, and imagine collective and artistic practices of resistance and joy.

UN MUNDO CH'IXI ES POSIBLE

In her 2018 book *A Ch'ixi World is Possible: Essays from a Present in Crisis*, the Bolivian sociologist Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui introduces the Aymara concept of "ch'ixi" as a subaltern decolonizing practice and frame of reference that prioritizes agency over passivity. While often associated with decolonial thought, Cusicanqui has long criticized decolonial studies and state policies as prefiguring a de-politicized condition that does little more than ornamentalize Indigenous culture at the hands of academia and the state. Cusicanqui therefore vindicates "lo ch´ixi" as an anticolonial practice engendered through conscious reflection and participation that resists state-sponsored processes of symbolic colonization.

As Cusicanqui explains, lo ch'ixi is "literally the mottled gray, formed from an infinity of black and white points that are unified in our perception, but remain pure and separate," serving to "acknowledge the permanent struggle in our subjectivity between 'lo Indio y lo europeo." Natalia Barrientos' series *Peregrino* (2019) serves as an arresting example of la mirada ch'ixi, a series of blurred photographs depicting the annual religious festival San Roque in Tarija, Bolivia. Originating in the mid-17th century colonial period, the San Roque festival was named by UNESCO in 2021 as Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. Founded in honor of a patron saint believed to have cured a leprosy outbreak, the festival features music, dancing, and dress representing los Chunchos, an Indigenous group that once inhabited the tropical valleys of the Central Andes.

In *Peregrino*, Barrientos captures a kind of evanescent essence of the festival, through unfocused images that reveal the chaotic energy of the event, and bursts of color from the Chuncho costumes that seem to recreate the rhythms of the music and dance. At the same time, there is a ghostlike quality, as if faint memories of the Chuncho culture, now largely extinct, inhabit the blurred outlines of the dancing figures. Natalia's series is also a fraught registry of patriarchy and fatherhood, as she attends the festival with her father after a long period of estrangement. "Between the tumult of the people, the costumes, the nostalgic music, the songs, and having been diagnosed with cancer, I sought to portray my father in the chaos of the party. We managed to share that moment of hope that he was going to be okay and that next year we would attend together again."

Nevertheless, Natalia's father did not survive his battle with cancer and the festival would be one of the last memories that they shared. Natalia now works as a professor of

photography at the Catholic University in Tarija, a role she assumed after emigrating to the United States and completing a fine arts degree at the University of Houston. Despite living in the United States for many years, Natalia felt that she was never able to assimilate in a way that didn't feel like a rejection of where she came from. It was while navigating that struggle of belonging that Natalia began to produce documentary works of video, collage, and photography based from family memories and archives. "We were so alone," said Natalia of the years she spent in Texas living with her mother. "And my work started to explore the weight that family has in Latin America, this idea that we are always pulled back to our family, to our origins." Those dynamics were challenging for Natalia, as her father—who was a public figure—had left the family and begun a new life with another woman. "I didn't feel that I had a family here or there," said Natalia, but being in Houston meant defining herself as a migrant more than defining herself as Bolivian. "I was never able to see Houston as my home. Never. It was always a place I was inhabiting and I said to myself, 'at some point, I'll leave.'"

Living and teaching back in Bolivia, Natalia doesn't feel that she can share her work publicly because of the intimate nature of the materials and subjects she portrays. Works on her website include collages made from family photos and letters, and a video installation depicting her mother's struggles with depression. While such works constructed from family archives and histories are not considered "art" in Bolivian society, Natalia finds that her photography students in Tarija are most interested in working with personal stories and family histories. "Here in Tarija there isn't any kind of art world, or there's a very basic notion of what art is. So I'm trying to do something for the chicos that are studying here. I want to give back in some way." In her classes, Natalia prompts her students to explore themes that are generally considered taboo in Bolivian society: mental health, family dynamics, constructions of masculinity, and "what it means to make art in this country."

While Natalia doesn't view her work as political, I believe it is linked to a practice that Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui calls "la micropolítica," or "elemental forms of everyday insurgency." Functioning outside of formal political spaces, micropolitics are activated through "small collectives and bodily actions that allow spaces of freedom to flourish. We are looking to re-politicize everyday life, be it from the kitchen, work or garden… to articulate manual labor with intellectual labor, to produce thought from everyday experiences." In her San Roque series *Peregrino*, in which figures in Indigenous dress reenact a colonizing Catholic ritual, Natalia blurs the lines between past and present, truth and reenactment, hope and illness—conveying just what Cusicanqui describes.

BASTARD FEMINISM

The growing autonomous feminist movement in Bolivia owes much of its force and vitality to the renowned La Paz-based collective Mujeres Creando, co-founded by the anarcho-feminist activist María Galindo. Galindo has been disrupting the hetero-patriarchal status quo in the Andes for more than three decades through a myriad of tools and methodologies, including graffiti, performance and video art, urban interventions, a daily radio program, and writings on patriarchy and coloniality. Taking Cusicanqui's theory of micropolitics to another level, Galindo's praxis is centered on daily acts of disobedience and joy in the face of the entrenched racism and patriarchy that pervade Bolivian society.

"I speak from a place of torture and violence, not to bear witness but to imagine happiness from a position of disobedience," writes Galindo in her 2021 book *Bastard Feminism* (18).

Galindo's own subversive practice is drawn from a long lineage of Andean Indigenous and chola women protagonists, who for centuries have forged strategies of everyday resistance, collaboration, and survival against multiple and overlapping dynamics of dispossession. Galindo coined the term "bastard feminism" as a way of naming the brutal contradictions inherent in the colonial legacies of a mestizo-Indigenous social fabric: "If we were to write a genesis on these lands, it would begin with the word rape. The first scene of creation that we would contemplate would not be that of Adam and Eve playing in paradise, but that of our mother being raped by our father. We have a direct link with the raped and we have a direct link with the rapist" (108). The struggle, she claims, lies not in the construction and objection of "the other," rather "the deep hatred against the India that we carry within" (35).

Galindo's response is to reject the forced binaries and heteronormativity that would seek to whitewash and conceal this history, and embrace the term bastard as "a space that legitimizes disobedience and cultural critique in all forms," (38) not from a place of victimization but from a place of agency, memory, and joy. Like Galindo and Cusicanqui, Gómez-Barris notes that the nexus of anarcho-Indigenous feminisms is first and foremost an active positionality that centers the autonomous body as a source of knowledge and resistance. "It is an intellectual and vernacular formation," writes Gómez-Barris, "that begins with modes of being, thinking, doing, and relating otherwise, that are experienced through the body and in relation to each other" (112).

Dani Coca (she/her and they/them) emigrated to New Jersey with their family in grade school, and while they were raised in a community with a strong Latinx presence, they didn't grow up around other Bolivians. At times, Dani was envious of the strong Dominican and Puerto Rican communities around her, engendering "almost a sense of shame, because I didn't get to see much of Bolivian culture growing up." Dani pursued illustration in college, which opened up a creative space for them to explore their Bolivian identity and culture: "That's how I learned to love myself," says Dani, who is passionate about creating characters that reflect their queer and diasporic experience. Dani's illustrations are bursts of bold, bright colors, predominantly featuring women. "The palettes I use are colors I remember from my childhood in Limoncito," says Dani, referring to the town in Santa Cruz where they were born. "I'm starting a new series focusing on different ethnic groups in Bolivia, specifically the women because they speak to me more." Dani pointed to the ethnic and regional divides that are often tensious in Bolivia, saying "I feel like our differences should be way more celebrated." Their new series endeavors to highlight "certain groups that I feel are especially ignored," like Bolivia's Afro-descendant communities.

Dani, 24, recently made their first gallery sale at a show at Jersey City's PATH Commuter Gallery called *Pause Listen Love*. The piece is an oil painting on canvas titled "Lady in the Leaves," featuring a portrait of a woman with Andean features set before a pre-Columbian archeological carving. The woman's eyes are closed, highlighting the pronounced lines of her eyes, cheeks, and jawbones, but her demeanor conveys a commanding sense of power and vitality. While Dani's works sometimes delve into

themes of erasure and cultural loss, they always strive to make their work feel warm and light-hearted. “I want people to look at my work and think, ‘this makes me feel happy, I feel hugged by this.’”

Dani now supports themself as an illustrator, crafting colorful designs and branding for clients, but they dream of eventually creating stories for comic books and children’s media. “Immigrant households are not happy at first when you say you want to explore creative fields,” Dani says. But the work also brings them closer to their Bolivian heritage, as Dani consults their family frequently about Bolivia’s diversity and complexities.

“I’d love to one day be able to push [my own] stories a little more and give some representation for little Bolivian kids that maybe also feel like me when I was a little kid, not seeing people like me depicted in the world around them.

In contrast to Dani, Malena Rodríguez García’s work is provocative, transgressive, even unnerving at times. Trained as a contemporary dancer in Chile, Malena is most inspired by creating public interventions and performance pieces that unsettle social norms and engage the audience directly. Most recently, Malena wrote, researched, directed, and performed in a multi-faceted dance and performance piece titled “Intersecciones Seculares: Proyecto Killa Kutiy,” sponsored by the Center for Cultural Revolution. The work engages the feminine pharmacopeia within the Andean cosmogony, an ancestral plant, animal, and mineral knowledge that has been essential for economies of care and corporal autonomy among Indigenous women. “This knowledge constitutes a silent power that has woven the psychic resistance against the attacks of colonialism and the Republic; a female power passed on for generations that today survives harassed by western medicine, globalizing capitalism and the conservative morality that still persists in our society.”[2]

In one dimension of the piece, Malena and two other women created a mobile cart selling infusions of herbs with healing properties used for women’s health and wellness, from treatments for urinary tract infections to plant-induced abortions (abortion is criminalized and heavily stigmatized in Bolivia, although Indigenous women continue to harbor this knowledge in clandestinity). The three performers navigated the cart through the streets and popular markets of Cochabamba, selling the infusions while engaging in conversation with patrons and passersby about women’s health and autonomy. They also handed out pamphlets explaining the healing properties of different plants and herbs, in addition to colonial-era propaganda that sought to criminalize and demonize Indigenous women’s pharmacopeial knowledge.

The artists also carried out an interactive dance performance that sought to evoke the following ideas and questions: “We think of the women’s body as a multidimensional space. What is the magnitude of a historical phenomenon? What is the volume and length that it encompasses in our bodies? How can it be measured? And if the phenomenon is several phenomena that reinvent themselves and establish new alliances in an evolving patriarchal pact, who would be the witches burned today?” The

performance enacts a number of scenes inspired by Silvia Federici's book *Caliban and the Witch: Women, the Body and Primitive Accumulation*, interspersed with readings from the audience of incantations, traditional healing practices, colonial testimonies of Andean witch hunts, and excerpts from Federici's book.

we're here, on behalf of ourselves... abjuring our faith." Afterwards, the audience is invited to drink an herbal infusion and engage in discussion about the themes raised in the piece.

While more provocative than the work of Dani Coca, Malena's artistic praxis similarly engages themes of Andean ancestral

In one scene titled "Becoming Animal," featuring Malena dancing with her head concealed by an image of a deer head, an audio recording narrates the recent kidnapping and torture of nine Quechua women in Peru accused of practicing witchcraft earlier this year. The performance includes a quote from the 1486 treatise on witchcraft *Malleus Maleficarum*, written by German Catholic clergyman Heinrich Kramer, which was used during the Inquisition to justify a campaign of extermination against women accused of practicing witchcraft: "...

knowing and being that traverse their lives in disparate yet overlapping ways. Like Dani, Malena seeks to construct a life of creative practice–personally and professionally–that allows her to "continually reinvent my position in the world. I wish to live with a community of people who create spaces for reflection and the production of thought about the body and its affections and traversals. I want to create spaces for creative practice and movement research. I wish to have the necessary resources for the production of my desires."

"...I wish to live with a community of people who create spaces for reflection and the production of thought about the body and its affections and traversals. I want to create spaces for creative practice and movement research. I wish to have the necessary resources for the production of my desires."

BODY AS TERRITORY

Adriana Herbas also combines the elements of provocation and joy, subversion and affection, that can be identified in Dani and Malena's works. Adriana, who also goes by the artistic name Kulli Sarita (purple corn), produces works that are both somber and elevating, often depicting women engaged in mobilizing political action, or connected intimately to the agricultural cycles of the earth. The viewer is at turns embraced and enraged by her work; in one print, a woman sits on a weaving over a medicinal concoction, while her back is held by another woman that accompanies her. The two figures are surrounded by the arching outline of a snake that encases them in a kind of dark embrace. The body of the snake is supported by a series of hands, their bodies concealed, presumably of a number of faceless women who also engage—silently, clandestinely—in both the embrace and the imbibement of the infusion. The words across the snake's back read "Desobediencia Acompañada," alluding to the widespread Latin American practice of accompaniment for women carrying out medical abortions in silence and secrecy. The themes and evocations of the piece are manifold: collective care, anthropomorphism, criminalization, Andean textility and cosmology, bodily autonomy, and subversion.

The works of each of these artists engage with themes of territory and displacement, situating the feminized body in a terrain of struggle encapsulated in the term cuerpo-territorio (body-territory). Credited to the Maya-Xinka comunitarian feminist Lorena Cabnal, cuerpo-territorio is an ontological and affective mode of organization and resistance that acknowledges the constitutive linkages between processes of territorial dispossession and destruction and patterns of violence against women. As the feminist sociologist Verónica Gago writes, the "idea-fuerza" of body-territory "expands a way of 'seeing' from the bodies experienced as territories and from the

territories experienced as bodies" (96) that serves as "expanded matter, an extensive surface of affects, trajectories, resources and memories" (99). In different forms, Adriana, Dani, Malena, and Natalia all experiment and negotiate within that expanded terrain, tracing their own bodies through experiences of displacement, cultural loss, rearticulation, and joy. Through that practice, they each contribute in their own way to the creation of Cusicanqui's mundo ch'ixi. "It is a utopia," says Cusicanqui "to think that we can really collectivize this vision and turn it into a resource for political action. But as a horizon, it gives us the possibility of rebellion."

For her part, Adriana's dreams are practical and utopian. "I want to learn as much as I can about engraving and printmaking, and then my dream is to have a printing press of women engravers so we can fill the streets with printmaking. And with that is the desire to inhabit and occupy the streets and the earth more than to inhabit social media. Because we have a lot of collective creative force that is very, very powerful."

ARCHITECTU

SPATI

URE &

AL POLITICS

CHARAS AND

By Wilfred Guerron

Josie Rolon, La Plaza Cultural in the foreground with CHARAS Recycling Center to the left in the middle ground, 1980, photograph.

THE RE-IMAGINATION OF LOISAIDA

ARCHITECTURE & SPATIAL POLITICS

As New Yorkers continue to combat an ever growing budget deficit,[1] they find themselves at the beginning of another period of city disinvestment and mass displacement—one that has already begun to disproportionately impact marginalized communities. With access to city resources and public services becoming more difficult and conversations around the future that continue to promote a high level of anxiety for most people, it might be worthwhile to look back at another period of uncertainty in New York City's history where community organizing and activism, coupled with an extensive arts program, provided alternative notions of power and ownership for community members.

In the early 1970s, to get out of a fiscal crisis, the city initiated a policy of "planned shrinkage,"[2] in which all spending on municipal services, subsidies for housing, public schools, fire stations, hospitals, and garbage collection were heavily reduced. Various low-income neighborhoods were directly impacted by these policy changes[3] which ultimately encouraged the redevelopment of New York for national and multinational corporations through the displacement of longtime residents. One of the most impacted groups was the large Puerto Rican community that settled in New York City following the "Great Migration"[4] of the 1950s. By 1960, the United States Census showed that there were well over 600,000 New Yorkers of Puerto Rican birth or parentage.[5]

One of the largest communities of Puerto Ricans in New York City was in the Lower East Side. Devastated by the fiscal crisis and subsequent policy changes, between 1974 and 1979, the Lower East Side lost two-thirds of its population; with the most significant drop seen among the section from Avenues B to C and from 3rd to 12th streets, which housed the highest number of Puerto Ricans: 14,908 to 4,597. From the 1970s and onwards, remaining residents were under the constant threat of gentrification (seen through the redevelopment of nearby neighborhoods like Greenwich Village and Soho), afraid that there would soon be a disappearance of affordable housing and further displacement of the working class.

As the Puerto Rican community in the Lower East Side faced the real possibility of extinction, it was the efforts of the remaining community members to directly address the multitude of problems found in the neighborhood that kept the community going. This conflict was captured in the mural project *La Lucha Continua/ The Struggle Continues* (1985-86) at La Plaza Cultural on 9th Street and Avenue C in the Lower East Side. Sponsored by Artmakers and CHARAS, this mural project comprised twenty six murals addressing six political issues: gentrification, police brutality, immigration, feminism, racism, and U.S. military intervention. The central mural, which lent its name "La Lucha Continua / The Struggle Continues" to the entire project, aimed to provide a sense of identity and place to the neighborhood.[6] "La Lucha Continua" narrates the past, present, and potential future of the community through immediate and legible imagery. Depictions of homelessness, eviction, and the physical destruction of housing stock are juxtaposed with the rehabilitation of the neighborhood's housing stock and a community cultural center. In the center

THE QUALITY OF LIFE IN

CALIDAD DE VIDA EN

Loisaida

June-July, 1978

Vol. I, No. 2

CONTENTS

Work Campers at the Garden on 12th Street V. Hale

of the mural is a clear ball held up by two hands that present a future signified through housing, various types of workers, and an idyllic image of children playing in an open field. However, this future is threatened by the imminent danger of gentrification in the personification of landlords through a green octopus in a limo.

While various historical details of the mural have been written about by scholars—homesteaders[7], gardens[8], a broader history of community development[9]—there is an object present in the mural that has been obscured within the history of the community. In the upper right-hand corner, there is a geodesic dome. Due to its placement in the pictorial composition, the mural suggests a limited role for the geodesic dome in this attempt to historicize the struggle of the community. However, one cannot help but think about the visual similarities of its circular shape of the dome with that of the clear ball, and its optimistic ambitions for the future. The inclusion of the dome in a mural over other prominent figures and organizations in the community raises an important question: what are we to make of the geodesic dome within the context of the community?

Over time, the geodesic dome became a symbol of community building for Loisaida, the Latinized pronunciation of Lower East Side coined by activist and poet Bimbo Rivas in 1974. Loisaida represents the determination of the Puerto Rican community and its long term residents to preserve and cultivate the neighborhood despite limited support from municipal and federal agencies. From its first appearance in 1972, the dome has appeared throughout the Lower East Side, coinciding with the mass adoption of the word Loisaida by the community and the city. The image of the dome and the word Loisaida are constantly paired together through photographs, newspaper and magazine articles, various

bureaucratic documents, exhibition posters, and banners. This deliberate pairing was crafted by the Puerto Rican activist organization CHARAS. Through the adaptation of the geodesic dome, CHARAS formed alternative notions of power and ownership over their community. As "the improbable dome builders,"[10] CHARAS built and cultivated the image of the dome to fit within their programming and ambitions for Loisaida. By tracing the shift from the geodesic dome as a physical structure within the built environment to the geodesic dome as an abstraction serving as a reminder of the past, the image of the dome is intrinsically tied to the creation, maintenance, and potential of Loisaida.

over a period of five months, September 1972–January 1973. With guidance from architect and inventor of the geodesic dome, Buckminister Fuller, the dome became a platform for CHARAS and Loisaida to experiment with how to address prominent social issues facing the community.

Although the text contains various photographs of the dome that were republished and distributed by various local and national media outlets, the impact of the geodesic domes in Loisaida does not stop with Fuller in 1972–1973. There is a rich history of CHARAS' dome building throughout the 1970s and 1980s that slowly began to shift away from its initial purpose

However, one cannot help but think about the visual similarities of its circular shape of the dome with that of the clear ball, and its optimistic ambitions for the future. The inclusion of the dome in a mural over other prominent figures and organizations in the community raises an important question: what are we to make of the geodesic dome within the context of the community?

The narrative around domes in the Lower East Side starts with Syeus Mottel's book *CHARAS: The Improbable Dome Builders* (1973), which tells the story of how CHARAS was able to build two geodesic domes as an alternative to current housing models

as radical alternative housing. Despite the media attention CHARAS' work with Fuller received, there is little written about what becomes of the dome as it begins to appear throughout the neighborhood and in other areas. The increased production of dome

making and dome imagery by CHARAS supports larger efforts by many activist and community organizations, such as CHARAS, to implement a new community identity under the mass adoption of Loisaida. By framing the conversation around Loisaida, we can begin to make sense of the photographs found in the CHARAS archives that point to an increased use and production of domes.

How did CHARAS and their dome building operate within the larger process of building Loisaida? To answer this question, one must first look at how community members themselves came to understand Loisaida. The best historical record of what the public was thinking and talking about during the period was the community magazine *The Quality of Life in / La Calidad de Vida en Loisaida* (March 1978 to December 1992). *The Quality of Life* served as a guide for the residents of Loisaida, ultimately evolving into an important source for news and other useful information for the community. Even though *The Quality of Life* was not a CHARAS specific publication, the channels of circulation for the publication were made possible through the work of CHARAS. In one of the first issues, there is an article titled "The Ideology of Loisaida" by Carmelo Quiñones. The article pulls quotes from several residents of Loisaida, stressing the importance of their role in rebuilding and reorganizing the community. For Quiñones, the "ideology" of Loisaida revolves around the ability to come together to make a claim to their community through physical actions for the future benefit of the residents.

If Loisaida was indicative of an active community constantly thinking about how to better themselves in hope for a better tomorrow, how did CHARAS and their domes promote this? In his PhD dissertation titled "Un Milagro de Loisaida" (A Loisaida Miracle, 1980), Daniel Chodorkoff provides the first serious look at dome building in the Lower East Side after Mottel's 1973 account. Chodorkoff understands the domes to function as both a physical and symbolic object.

As a physical object, the dome was an all-encompassing project: it had a beginning and an end, taught participatory decision making, and showed how communal work can produce a result that would be insurmountable for one person. Symbolically, the dome was a representation of the new environment that they actively participated in creating and the dome building process itself was meant to empower the community to continually seek and produce change in their environment.

A selection of a few photographs from the CHARAS archive captures the community empowerment that Chodorkoff mentioned. Take note of the various different types of spaces the domes are being built in, the different functions of the dome, and how

people are interacting with them.

By the mid-1980s, dome building by CHARAS began to slow down, with a complete stop of dome building by the early 1990s. With the move to El Bohio, an abandoned school turned community center on 9th Street near Avenue B in 1977, CHARAS shifted its operation to supporting various other artistic media and rented spaces to local community groups. What happened to the domes?

When CHARAS began to invest in El Bohio and the arts, the image of the dome did not fully disappear. Looking at a thirty-fifth anniversary poster for CHARAS, it fully acknowledges the CHARAS-El Bohio identity shift. However, on a closer look, we can see in their new logo the use of the comedy and tragedy masks incorporates the geodesic dome into their aesthetic design. If the reference to their history of dome building was not apparent enough, the children who are celebrating (in reference to CHARAS' focus on the youth of the community) are holding balloons shaped as geodesic domes. Why is there an intentional call back to CHARAS's legacy as dome builders in Loisaida?

To answer this question, one must return to the mural "La Lucha Continua." In the mural, the importance of the image of the geodesic dome is not apparent—at first. However, by recalling the history of the geodesic dome as a tool to empower the community, there is a connection between the legacy of dome building in Loisaida and the future of the community. The future of Loisaida is dictated and shaped by the actions of the past. As the mural shows, it is the work of the community that brought about the changes seen in the physical landscape of the Lower East Side in the 1970s and 1980s, and it is the continued work of the community that will bring Loisaida closer to the idyllic scene depicted within the clear ball at the center of the mural. As external forces, such as developers and city government, began to pose direct and indirect challenges to members of the community, CHARAS and the dome gave people the chance to see the full potential of their actions when working as a community. With the dome perched up in the top, right hand corner of the mural, it is not obscured. In reality, the dome is responsible for all the change happening below it. At first, the dome drew its importance from how its physical structure actively engaged with the community, the built environment, and the immediate needs of the people. But, as the physical act of dome building disappeared, the image of the dome remained, serving as a constant reminder of the spirit of Loisaida—the spirit of hope.

What can we take from this history of dome building in the Lower East Side? I argue that dome building presented one way of mediating how people can reclaim contested spaces to fulfill needs within a community. Dome building was a part of a larger arts program happening in the City and the rest of the country at the time that showed the valuable role of the arts within community activism. More importantly, dome building, in particular the existing photographs, serve as a reminder of the real potential of community organizing.

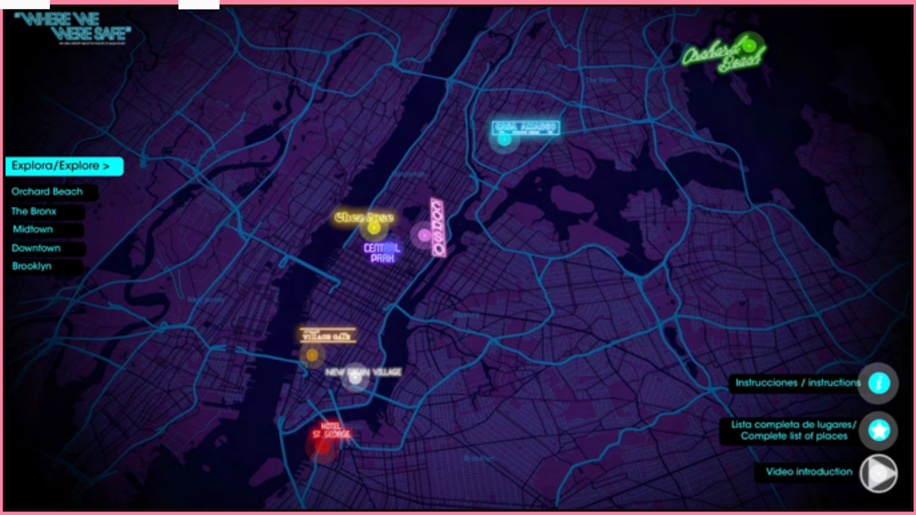
AUTHOR'S NOTE:

This article stems from the research I conducted for my master's thesis. The research on this topic of dome building would not have been possible without the help and support of Libertad Guerra, urban anthropologist, curator, and Executive Director of the Clemente Soto Velez Cultural and Education Center, and Nandini Bagchee, Associate Professor of Design and History at the Spitzer School of Architecture at CCNY and Principal of Bagchee Architect. A significant portion of my research came out of my time as a fellow for the Loisaida Center in the summer of 2019, where Libertad was formerly director. Working alongside Libertad, Nandini, Andrea Gordillo (who is currently at The Clemente), and Alejandro Epifanio Torres, I became more aware of the power behind the visual arts and the passion needed to confront the various injustices faced by the Latinx community in NYC. Libertad provided essential feedback and insight as her expertise and intimate knowledge of CHARAS provided a framework for me to experiment and learn from. Nandini introduced me to the topic of the dome and shared with me her tremendous wealth of knowledge about the Lower East Side. Nandini's 2018 book "Counter Institution: Activist Estates of the Lower East Side" and her 2019 exhibition "Activist Estates" served as an invaluable foundation for my work. Lastly, it is important to highlight the legacy of CHARAS. Their impact on the community continues through the work of various individuals and organizations in the Lower East Side, such as the Clemente and the Cooper Square Community Land Trust.

"WHERE W
WERE SAF

By **Marcos Echeverría Ortiz**

WE
FE”:



On this interactive map, you travel around the city and discover the oral testimonies behind these iconic salsa spaces. Photo: whereweweresafe.org

MAPPING RESILIENCE IN THE 1970S SALSA SCENE

ARCHITECTURE & SPATIAL POLITICS

"WHERE WE WERE SAFE"

"Just like today, [in the 1970s] the police killed Blacks and Latinos as nothing," said journalist Aurora Flores over Zoom during the 2020 summer protests following the murder of George Floyd. "So going to the rumbas at Central Park was like a refuge, a liberation," adds Flores, who can't help but see parallels between the abrasive 1970s and that day's reality, also fueled by the COVID-19 crisis. "Today, no one can go to the rumbas. Do you know how many hands touch those tumbadoras?"

That same summer, Mickey Melendez, a Young Lord who was deeply involved in the Latin music scene since the 1960s, reflected on the importance of keeping and developing cultural spaces amid violent times. "When you are in El Barrio, any Barrio, you are safe [...] Once you step out of El Barrio, now you are stepping out into the world, you know? So one way of looking at these spaces that you are talking about is that we created our own little barrios wherever we went to be safe in them." The places we were referring to are the historical sites of Salsa music—venues, record stores, theaters, and public spaces—now disappeared or destroyed.

Both Micky's and Aurora's testimonies provided insight to something that I started researching in the fall of 2019: the deep connections between Salsa, territorial erasure, and community. My objective was to discover how these disappeared sites—part of the Latin cultural heritage but overlooked in New York's traditional history—helped the community develop resistance dynamics in the 1970s. As I explored possible answers

to this question, I found a complex narrative intertwined with structural violence, resilience, and pan-Latino consciousness.

WHERE WE WERE SAFE

Although New York has been a Latino city for more than a century, official records exclude and overlook the strong connections between territory and this community's presence in the historical record. The maps used to develop redlining, urban renewal plans, and slum clearance were used throughout the 20th century as tools of oppression. They targeted and erased Black and Brown cultural enclaves. For this reason, it is alarming to still not see Casa Amadeo in the city's official landmark map,[1] despite being part of the National Register of Historic Places of the U.S. and recognized by New York state as a historical landmark. If Salsa was one of the most potent and meaningful Latin expressions in New York City history, what happened to their historical places? Why are they not recognized, preserved, and acknowledged? To rebuild a fundamental part of this city's cultural experience, I decided to map, discuss, and preserve the disappeared landmarks of Salsa music.

Where We Were Safe[2] is an ongoing interactive oral history map/archive that focuses on collecting memories about the lost and destroyed Salsa music places in New York City, such as ballrooms, clubs, record stores, and outdoor venues. Through digital mapping and cultural memory, it aims to reconstruct historical space and recover these sites' heritage through a lens of social, racial, and cultural dynamics that fed the Latin experience.

This project concentrates specifically on the 1970s for two reasons. First, this decade was fundamental for developing "Salsa music" as a musical form and culture in New York City and Latin America. Second, during this decade, African-American and Latin barrios felt the effects of violent urban policies that pushed them to organize social and civic movements against racism, police brutality, and urban decay. For this reason, this project approaches Salsa as a cohesive cultural force to understand how it negotiated ideals of pan-Latino identity in New York City. Under this context, I defined "the places of Salsa" as historical sites, private and public, where not only salsa music was performed but also where the Latin community knit social dynamics of cultural resistance.

FINDING THE PLACES AND PEOPLE WHO INHABITED THEM

There is no official document that maps the historical places of Salsa. One close approximation is Roberta L. Singer and Elena Martinez's investigation[3] about theaters and other mambo music venues in the South Bronx during the first half of the 20th century.

My main interest was the 1970s, so after intense research—documentaries, books, records, Youtube videos, blogs, fandom sites, and some initial interviews—I identified more than 100 sites.[4] Unfortunately, all of them, except for Casa Amadeo, which members of the community still own, are entirely obliterated.

Archival material about these sites was limited, almost nonexistent. Since the COVID-19 crisis blocked any possibility of in-person archival research, digital collections of important historical and educational institutions such as the New York Public Library, Museum of the City of New York, and others had limited items on this matter, which shows how under-archived and

under-preserved this part of Latin history is. However, I retrieved some photos and videos available online on social media and fandom blogs. Most of this content is recycled by different accounts, which suggests scarcity. Also, it was common for images not to have citations, context, or proper categorization, which directly affects the preservation, distribution, and management of these historical items in the digital realm.

Nevertheless, it is fundamental to recognize the cultural relevance of these online community "archives" created by and for salsa music fans. Salserxs have operated outside conventional categorization and archiving methods to create a community model based on collaboration. For my research, this was a powerful way of approaching salsa's material culture. Although pictures, concert posters, and audiovisual material are recycled by vloggers, journalists, YouTubers, and influencers from different social media platforms, it shows the effort of preserving and rendering a lost past. Sharing and resharing this content shows the need of reclaiming agency and power over what is worth preserving and remembering. It is a call to provide continuity to a part of Latinx history that is not available anywhere else, and to make sure the history of this music genre, which now is global, is recognized and valued.

Because of these limitations with historical artifacts and materiality, memory became the core of the project. Rather than a nostalgic approach, it gives communities a sense of continuity and the agency to manage, recreate, and understand their past. Therefore, I utilize memory as resistance to preserve a collective knowledge under discussions framed by historians such as Piere Nora, Jass Assman, and others. For this reason, as an oral history archive, *Where We Were Safe* preserves the voice of ordinary people. I was interested in characters often obscured behind the shine of Salsa stars. People who experienced the lost places at the dance floors, in the bathrooms, behind curtains, or below the stages. After months of locating potential characters and creating a list of nearly 40 names, I interviewed 18 participants,[5] including dancers, academics, journalists, photographers, videographers, DJs, bouncers, fans, political activists, and some musicians directly involved in the Salsa music scene.

RENDERING A MAP OF THE RESISTANCE

Inspired by social cartography, I was interested in applying non-traditional mapping approaches. For this reason, participants had the agency to create their own socio-spatial relations. They talked about their experience while growing up

Salserxs have operated outside conventional categorization and archiving methods to create a community model based on collaboration.

in their barrios, the other areas around the city they frequented, and the meaningful personal locations and landmarks that made them feel celebrated.

After almost 1,080 minutes of spoken testimony, registered within four pandemic months, the testimonies ended up rendering personal oral maps that simultaneously generated a collective territory experienced in the same eight places: Casa Amadeo Record Store[6] and Orchard Beach[7] in the Bronx, El Corso[8] and the Chez Jose[9] clubs in midtown Manhattan, Bethesda Fountain in Central Park[10], The New Rican Village[11] in the Lower East Side, The Village Gate Club[12] in Greenwich Village, and St. George Hotel[13] in Brooklyn.

The selection of these landmarks highlights factors such as location, audience, and affordability. First, these sites were located all around the city, evidence of how dense and active the salsa scene was. Trombonist Papo Vazquez recalls[14] playing every Saturday night in three different clubs in the Bronx, Manhattan, and Brooklyn. "That is the sad thing about New York. That time no longer exists, and there are no such places anymore. At that time, there were at least 50 different nightclubs, and each club had at least two or three bands."

Additionally, location informed some urban tensions defined by class between the uptown and downtown dichotomy. Salsero Pete Bonet, who managed the famous Corso Club in the late 1960s and early 1970s, said: "Men had to come well dressed. They couldn't come with a shirt. Here just entered *the cream*, the *good* people. *Los titeres* who came in sneakers or *majones* could not enter the Corso." In contrast, public spaces such as Orchard Beach and rumbas at Bethesda Fountain in Central Park contest these class conventions. Salsera Daisy Fahie remembers[15] that Orchard Beach, once occupied by only white families, was reclaimed by the Latin community thanks to Ernie Ensley's Salsa Sundays. "Latinos finally found a place where our community could come together to chat, dance, and see orchestras. That is why they call Orchard Beach the Bronx Riviera." Additionally, original Central Park rumbero Felix Sanabria recalls[16] how Afro-Caribbean sounds performed in an open public space became a statement of pride and existence: "For me, rumbas have been a reason to say that I'm someone, got it? That I'm part of the nation and the community, that I'm not marginal. It gives you meaning."

Second, although all these Salsa places were part of the same Latin Music ecosystem, they responded to different interests and welcomed different audiences. This helps to understand the relation—or distance—between an older, conservative audience and a newer generation of young Latinos interested in counter-cultural ideals. Photographer Máximo Colón, who has documented the Latin music scene since the 1970s, said[17] that The New Rican Village was a place for "Students, militants, and intellectuals—a place for people from our community involved in cultural and political stuff." This audience was known as the *sneaker crowd*: young Latin college students interested in politics, social justice, and Latin pride. Young Lord Mickey Melendez adds[18] that unlike any other traditional salsa club, "this was a place for left Latin cultural development. It really took the Nuyorican cultural experience to a place where you can experience different things [poetry, theater, and music] under one roof." For this reason, the avant-garde[19] Latin sound of the late 1970s—bands such as Conjunto Libre, Salsa Refugees, and Fort Apache—performed here.

Third, depending on the site's location and audience, each allowed for racial integration, a sense of dignity, and education. For example, the Village Gate club, located in Greenwich Village, endorsed racial integration between Latins, Blacks, and whites by integrating two musical scenes: Jazz and Salsa. Salsera Daisy Fahie remembers[20] that "when Latin music started, we danced and enjoyed ourselves. I mingled with Chinese, Blacks, and Whites; with teachers, doctors, and lawyers. Latin music brought people together."

The Chez Jose, located in one of the most exclusive neighborhoods in midtown Manhattan, provided a comfort level and a safe space for the community. Former owner Arnie Segarra recalls[21] that the most important thing about this place was "To see your people, your blood, your generation enjoying themselves, forgetting about the hardships. There is something about that. [...] Pride, dignity, and you were with the rainbow people: dark-skin Latinos, black skin Latinos...and the respect for each other."

Uptown in the South Bronx, Casa Amadeo provided a safe space[22] while the neighborhood was burning. "Mike [the owner] helped a lot of people. And he was there while the Bronx burned. He was there...And he supported the youth that was disconnected from Latin music. In what he sold, he taught me a lot, and I learned a lot from him," explains DJ and salsera Carmen Cepeda.

Testimonies like these weave a narrative that situates salsa's landmarks as cultural ecosystems that helped a generation to resist and celebrate their existence mientras todo se estaba derrumbando. The memories and some found visual evidence are archived in 65 short video vignettes that can be accessed through an interactive map,[23] a repository of the participants,[24] and a section that organizes the testimonies into seven topics of resistance.[25]

TRANSMEDIA

An archive that does not promote reinterpretation, critique, reproduction, and community is dead. As a digital project, generating community gathering spaces are vital to making this story more accessible, active, and horizontal.

For the last year, the archive has toured film festivals worldwide via public screenings. Here, the activities included deeply exploring the salsa map as we listened to the oral testimonies and watched the visual material together. This format is powerful for the community of the 1970s salsa club scene, as you can see a visual representation of that vibrant nightlife for the first time.

The screenings have been presented in Spain, Germany, Panamá, Puerto Rico, Colombia, Argentina, and others. In October 2022, the Society for Visual Anthropology, part of the American Anthropological Association, hosted a public screening at the Annual Anthropological Convention in Seattle and awarded *Where We Were Safe* as Best Multimedia Project of the Year.

Another project extension is *Memoria, Salsa and Resistencia*, an interactive exhibition based on the digital archive. Its objective is to activate the oral stories and memories compiled during the investigation. The exhibition shows the material culture behind the lost spaces of salsa, including pictures, concert posters, flyers, records, and never seen video footage by videographer Orlando Godoy. This Colombian filmmaker spent nearly 20 years recording live music sessions in these venues. Through a QR


"WHERE WE WERE SAFE"
LA HISTORIA ORAL SOBRE LOS LUGARES DE LA SALSA EN NUEVA YORK
AN ORAL HISTORY ABOUT THE PLACES OF SALSA IN NYC
HOTEL ST. GEORGE
CENTRAL PARK
CASA AMADEO
VILLAGE GATE
CORSO
Chez Jose
NEW RICAN VILLAGE
FCDHV
FINOF 2022
#NEF
EFFNY
www.wherewewheresafe.org
AN INTERACTIVE DOCUMENTARY / ARCHIVE BY MARCOS ECHEVERRIA ORTIZ

code, the user can access and listen to the stories associated with each artifact of the past.

What meaningful experiences do these two activations offer? First, it renders a physical space to talk about the landmarks of salsa that don't exist anymore. From a symbolic approach, it is essential to fabricate a powerful itinerant place to activate the memories and rebuild these spaces. Second, the events promote intergenerational communication between Latino elders and Latinx youngsters. Both activations have sparked conversations about displacement, segregation, and the efforts to stop social injustice. Third, it occupies private and public space through a salsa party. Orchestras and big bands are not part of the salsa scene as they were in the past, so DJs are keeping the culture alive. We are a community that is constantly moving due to immigration or to expanding our pan-Latinidad around the record player. The role of the DJ in this context offers historical continuity through sound. They build new safe spaces for newcomers by inserting old salsa music in shared contemporary spaces. Therefore, their presence as part of our experience is relevant.

Last year, *Where We Were Safe* also launched a bilingual publication based on the archive called "The Lost Places of Salsa Music in New York City," in collaboration with Terminal Ediciones. The 54-page book has two editions and contains archive material, a brief story behind these spaces, a map, and oral stories. This book aims to create material evidence of Latinx history in the United States. This is an act of resistance, and the print medium archives and states the existence of these forgotten spaces in a city that rampantly erases its landscape.

PA'LANTE

Who is left behind? As a map/archive of the past, it is necessary to recognize its incompleteness. However, this allows *Where We Were Safe* to be a living archive with the potential of incorporating other underrepresented voices and un-archived pieces of the past.

Salsa has historically gravitated around macho-centered perspectives, which have over exoticized and commodified Latin and Afro-Latin women. This violence is addressed in the archive by journalist Aurora Flores and DJ and salsera Carmen Cepeda. They report how misogynistic and toxic the environment of some clubs and venues was. As a project that maps dynamics of resistance, it is fundamental to extend this discussion to challenge normalized misogyny in Salsa's golden years. At the same time, there is no mention of the role of the LGBTQI+ community. Although this group is often linked to the Disco and the Ball subcultures of the 1970s, it is necessary to examine their perspectives, purpose, and experience during the development of Salsa music in New York City.

The eight places included in the map are starting points to understand Salsa's landmarks and their creation, development, functionality, and later, disposal. Now, the effort is to archive other venues in the Bronx, Brooklyn, Queens, and El Barrio. Sites such as theaters, magazines, radios, and record labels are often obscured by the metanarrative of the Fania empire, but they were central to developing Salsa as a cultural expression. For this objective, finding future funding is a requisite.

Finally, when is it enough? When to stop talking about and archiving the past? Western culture is overpopulated with institutions and media projects that aim to remember. However, remembrance is a privilege of hegemonic culture while some other communities struggle and fight for having "history" in the first place. The "boom of memory" does not have the same political implications for everyone. For some groups in the United States, memory production can be romantic, nostalgic, and even cliché. For others, remembrance and repetition could be a process of resistance for the right of existence. For this reason, I hope that "Where We Were Safe" empowers communities to record, promote, and preserve their contested or manipulated narratives. It is fundamental to restore practices for self-representation through storytelling as a powerful and honest way to ensure historical continuity.

THE EVOL OF

Pepper, 2018. Photo by Amina Cruz.

By Jorge Cruz

UTION

QUEER LATINX NIGHTLIFE IN LOS ANGELES

ARCHITECTURE & SPATIAL POLITICS

Far from the bars and clubs in West Hollywood, a neighborhood long known as the center of gay nightlife in Los Angeles, queer Latinos have long carved out spaces in their own neighborhoods that shifted the center of queer nightlife closer to home. From Club Tempo in East Hollywood that brands itself as the original gay cowboy nightclub with its frequent vaquero nights to Chico in Montebello that has always attracted a more working-class gay Latino clientele.

Even residential backyards in East L.A. became sites of placemaking for Latinos during the party crew scene in the '90s and more recently for the Maricón Collective, who threw parties that were reminiscent of family gatherings and high school kickbacks but from a queer perspective.

Many clubs that once defined queer Latinx nightlife in the city for decades have since closed their doors, like Circus Disco and Arena nightclub, well known in the '90s for mixing deep house tracks until the early hours by iconic queer Latina DJ Irene Gutierrez, with her popular trademark call: "How many motherfucking Latinos are in this motherfucking house?" Queer Latinx parties continue to offer an important alternative space for those who feel excluded from the more mainstream gay venues.

Queer Latinx nightlife in L.A. has evolved over the years through a process of *spatial entitlement*, which scholar Gaye Theresa Johnson describes as the way in which "marginalized communities have created new collectivities based not just upon exclusion from physical places" but also the imaginative and creative use of these spaces to "articulate new modes of *social citizenship*."[1]

"Excluded from these collective identities," Johnson writes, "aggrieved people have fashioned alternative expressions of collectivity and belonging." This, in turn, provides a means for understanding how working-class queer Latinx communities and individuals create social membership into what scholar Jose Esteban Muñoz calls the *brown commons*, which is made up of "feelings, sounds, buildings, neighborhoods, and environments" in a *brownness* that is defined by "being *with*" and "being *alongside*."[2]

"They are brown in part because they are devalued by the world outside their commons," writes Muñoz, "but they are also brown insofar as they smolder with life and persistence." Spatial entitlement and a brown commons offer a deeper understanding of queer Latinx spaces not only as important sites of placemaking but also demonstrates how clubs, bars and underground spaces formed counternarratives for the creation of new identities and identifications.

THE PARTY CREWS OF THE '90S

In the early 1990s, a generation of disaffected working-class Latino youth came of age in an environment marked by the 1992 L.A. riots, a period of heightened police surveillance against minoritized communities. Many Latino teenagers found solace by forming party crews in Los Angeles and its surrounding communities like El Monte, Montebello, Downey, and Hacienda Heights. These party crews would dominate the Latino underground landscape throughout the '90s, and it was in these spaces that many queer Latinx youth developed a sense of spatial entitlement that would shape queer nightlife in later years.

Carlos Morales, a Los Angeles DJ known as DJ Crasslos, grew up in Hacienda Heights and was first introduced to the party crew scene in his early teens by his older sister who was a member of a party crew. As Guadalupe Rosales, founder of the digital archive *Veteranas and Rucas*, writes in her photo essay "When Chicana Party Crews Ruled Los Angeles," party crews allowed young men and women to engage in resistant cultural practices at a time when Latino communities in Los Angeles were often disempowered and criminalized.

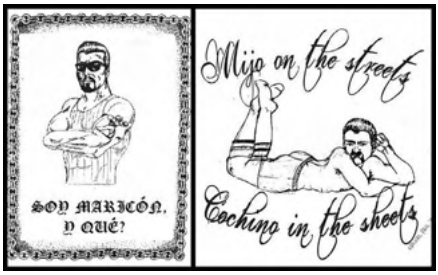
For Morales, watching his older sister organize with a party crew inspired him to become part of one himself. He vividly recalls the diverse range of music that permeated the space, from house, techno, and drum and bass to freestyle and jungle music. As an openly gay Latino, Morales said that music was an element of the scene that united everyone, recalling how the lyrics of

house music spoke about love, unity, and respect for one another.

"When you get into the beats in house music and let your body go, you just let yourself go, and you naturally break down that barrier you have of being very masculine" Morales said. "It was still very homophobic back then, and if you acted a little feminine, they would think you were gay. But at the same time, these homies were plucking their eyebrows and vogueing. It was a very queer scene. Some of these guys found these spaces as a way to express these repressed feelings. People weren't afraid to be who they were."

The party crew scene adopted a lot of the fashion and dance from rave culture and was heavily influenced by queer Black culture from the New York City ballroom scene, which highlights the way in which queer culture traversed through geographical boundaries to form a shared queer identity. Morales also describes how British new wave and glam rock artists, like David Bowie and Dead or Alive, promoted a more androgynous look that transgressed normative forms of gender expression, which also influenced the way in which gender was performed and reimagined within the party crew scene.

As the main core of that generation grew older, party crews eventually disappeared in the late '90s as club culture became more popular in Los Angeles. Many of the queer



Latinx youth of the party crew generation became DJs and promoters for larger bars and clubs in the city, incorporating a lot of the music and cultural atmosphere into these spaces.

THE MARICÓN COLLECTIVE

Frustrated with the lack of queer brown spaces, Rudy "Bleu" Garcia started throwing parties in his late teens as a DJ in venues throughout the city, mixing everything from punk and '80s freestyle music to songs by the Mexican rock group Café Tacuba. By the mid 2000s, he became a regular DJ at the iconic Mustache Mondays, considered by many as one of the best queer parties in L.A. at the time. Started by the late Ignacio "Nacho" Nava Jr., Mustache Mondays redefined queer nightlife in the city by combining music and art with exhibitions and performances from Latinx artists like rafa esparza, Gabriela Ruiz, and San Cha.

The collaborative atmosphere that defined Mustache Mondays was a site of brown commons as queer Latinx people demonstrated their ability to strive and flourish in a shared space that embodied the nuances of everyday queer life, from the sights and sounds on the dancefloor to the visual representation of the fashion and performances that marked a shared queer Latinx identity.

After the success of Mustache Mondays, Bleu partnered with Carlos Morales and other queer Latino DJs to form the Maricón Collective. Created from a desire to "brown up the space," the group played a mixture of cumbias, oldies, and house music in intimate locales like East L.A. residential backyards that were reminiscent of the party crew scene of the '90s. The events became increasingly popular because they offered

"When you get into the beats in house music and let your body go, you just let yourself go, and you naturally break down that barrier you have of being very masculine" Morales said. "It was still very homophobic back then, and if you acted a little feminine, they would think you were gay. But at the same time, these homies were plucking their eyebrows and vogueing. It was a very queer scene. Some of these guys found these spaces as a way to express these repressed feelings. People weren't afraid to be who they were."

a unique experience, which included go-go men in jockstraps pushing paletero carts while handing out popsicles in the shape of Juan Gabriel and Selena.

"We were consistently influenced by generations before us," Bleu said. "We were just trying to have fun and listen to the music that we would listen to with our friends and family growing up but be in a space with our queer friends and partners while slow dancing to oldies or Los Bukis and not really thinking about what was happening outside those doors."

"People really needed that," Blue said. "They needed that home, they needed to feel seen, validated, and they saw themselves in us and we saw ourselves in them."

Bleu and Morales would continue to DJ throughout the city after the Maricón Collective, with Bleu organizing the legendary Club Scum in Chico, a monthly queer Latinx punk party that mixed goth drag queen performances with the sound of iconic L.A. punk bands like the Germs, and Morales hosting a weekly radio program on the Boyle Heights community radio station KQBH.

THE PLUSH PONY

Although many queer nightlife spaces have welcomed every spectrum of the queer community, Lesbian bars in L.A. have long provided a much-needed space for Chicana lesbians outside the more male dominated queer venues, with the iconic but since closed Plush Pony bar inspiring the late Chicana lesbian artist Laura Aguilar's photo series of the same name.

"It was one of those spaces that if you blinked, you'd miss it," said writer and educator Raquel Gutiérrez who has written extensively on queer nightlife in Los Angeles. "It was like entering a portal that felt like a large, converted garage, a very low budget sort of operation."

The images that formed part of Aguilar's Plush Pony series beautifully capture the diversity of that space as a site of brown commons, which offers a snapshot into the intimate bonds that were formed by Chicana lesbians in the early '90s. Described as a "butch/femme joint," Gutiérrez writes how it was a space where Aguilar found a "sense of kin with its barflies."[3] Departing from her previous work photographing artists, academics, and activists in her Latina Lesbians series, Aguilar chose instead to focus her attention on the more working-class Chicana lesbian clientele that frequented the Plush Pony.

Located in the El Sereno neighborhood, the bar was one of the few nightlife venues in the city catering to Chicana lesbians. As Gutierrez writes, the Plush Pony signaled what it meant to be brown and queer from East Los Angeles in a time and space where "one could traffic in the promiscuity between the aspirational lesbian and the rough queer." Unlike the subjects featured in the *Latina Lesbian* series, Gutierrez said the Plush Pony series captured the roughness of barrio nightlife in the faces of its anonymous subjects.

The black and white portraits offered a glimpse into the way in which Chicana lesbians engaged in spatial entitlement by converting the Plush Pony into a site of brown commons, one where the rugged queer could find commonality and kinship outside the nuclear family to form queer social networks in their own neighborhoods.

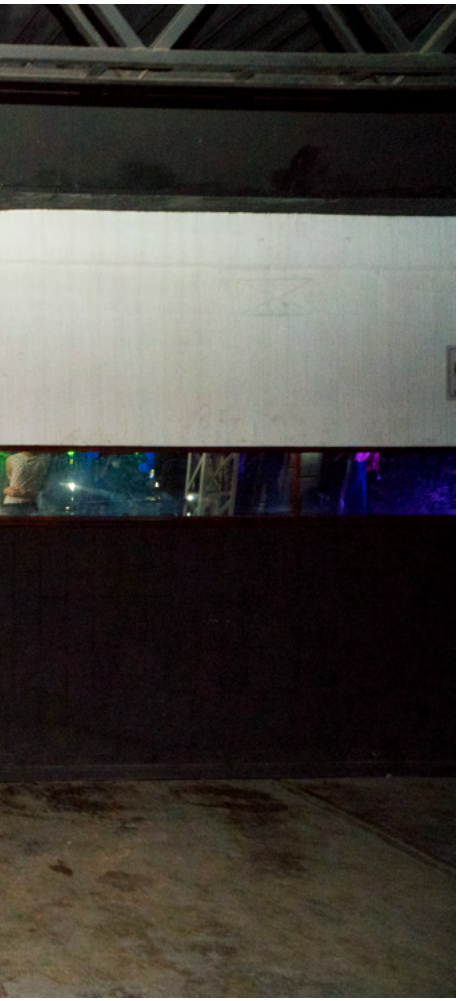
IN THE BROWN COMMONS

For others like Joaquín Gutierrez, a longtime public health worker and founder of the monthly queer party Noches de Aay Tú, these spaces offered an opportunity to promote public health services to a community that has long been underserved and neglected. Gutierrez combined his experience as a DJ and public health worker to provide mobile rapid HIV testing centers outside Latinx bars and clubs, with Mustache Mondays being one of the first queer Latinx venues where Joaquín set up his mobile unit.

"Traditionally, a lot of these mobile testing units and services were being promoted in gay bars in West Hollywood," Joaquín said, "but nobody was trying to reach out to the more underground queer spaces. I saw this as an opportunity to tap a part of the community that nobody was really paying attention to, and I knew how beneficial these resources could be."

A native of Huntington Park in southeast Los Angeles, Joaquín started throwing queer Latinx parties at art shows and swap meets, which always included drag performances and rapid HIV testing on site. "We have to meet community where they are at," Gutierrez said, "and we have to understand that when we are with community, we thrive."

Bleu, Gutierrez, and Morales, all acknowledged that their parties weren't the only queer Latinx parties happening in the city, with Gutierrez saying that his party was "just a piece of the story."



Queer Latinx nightlife in LA continues to evolve as the queer Latinx community evolves. From Club Scum that provided a space for the queer punks to Chico that was always known as the spot for the queer *homeboys* and countless other spaces that were created out of a desire to collectively build a place where queer Latinx people would feel welcome.

"The reason these spaces are so important is because we're getting to tell our stories the way it comes out of us naturally," Gutierrez said. "The way we can take up that space and make it our own, being intentional with everything we do to center the black and brown experience. It's important to tell our story through music, art, drag, fashion, but also through health and the importance of community by taking care of each other."

For me, queer Latinx nightlife in Los Angeles was always a space where I felt connected to a larger community. Being *with* and being *alongside* other queer brown folk made me feel like I wasn't alone, whether it was dancing until the early hours to a familiar house beat by DJ Crasslos or ending my night at Club Tempo and watching two burly Latino men with their vaquero hats slow dancing together to a classic Mexican ballad. As Bleu said: "In the end, we didn't want the night to end."

VISUALIZ
CHICANX
PRESENC

By Kale Serrato Doyen

ING

E

Serrato Family Room, March 5, 2020. Large format.

IN THE RURAL MIDWEST

ARCHITECTURE & SPATIAL POLITICS

VISUALIZING CHICANX PRESENCE

AUTHOR'S NOTE:

I am indebted to my family and church members for sharing with me the history of my diaspora and our Saginaw hometown, especially my grandpa Emilio Serrato Jr. He and I discussed much of the history in this photo essay during a 2017 oral history about his brother's band, ? and the Mysterians.

The Scottish band The Bay City Rollers named themselves after throwing a dart on a globe that landed on Bay City, Michigan. To me, growing up Latinx in the predominantly white, post-industrial, rural region of Mid-Michigan felt as random as a dart throw. My childhood home was among the expansive farm fields surrounding two cities, Saginaw and Bay City. Being mixed, my engagement with each city was mediated by race; I shuttled between the two cities visiting my Mexican-American family in Saginaw and my white family in Bay City. Three generations of my Chicanx (Mexican-American) family have lived in Saginaw and interacted with the region in this way. My own transient engagement with the cities is reminiscent of my tíos, who formed their band ? and the Mysterians in Saginaw but recorded their #1 Billboard hit, "96 Tears," upriver in Bay City.

My experience of Michigan is far from the state's perception in the national social imaginary. As a swing state, Michigan receives national attention but often without a nuanced understanding of its social landscape. National news coverage often and rightly identifies polar opposite narratives within the state, ranging from recent right-wing extremist activity in response to pandemic guidelines set by Governor Gretchen Whitmer to the now 8-year ongoing Flint Water Crisis. In the week preceding the 2020 presidential primary in Michigan, the Mid-Michigan region was spotlighted in a New York Times article illuminating the economic crises facing the "blue-collar" demographic.[1] However, the article made little mention of Saginaw's significant Black population and no mention of the Latinx population, inadvertently demonstrating the misrepresentation and invisibility people of color experience living in rural areas. Latino Studies, too, often bypasses the rural Midwest. Although scholarship of the Midwest is emerging, the discipline is largely represented by more concentrated communities living in the country's coasts and borderlands.

This photo essay will demonstrate how communities of color are made peripheral in Michigan. The photographs in this essay are my own and feature sites of my family's diasporic history in Mid-Michigan, and I took most of them on my grandpa's 35mm camera. In this essay, I will contextualize these photographs with statistical/political maps and the Chicanx lived-experience of the state's infrastructure. Here, people of color have historically been marginalized by virtue of space and, consequently, their presence minimized in the public sphere. Invisibilized communities of color face the gradual repercussions of generational poverty, health crises, the formation of densely white and harmful conservative communities, and community erasure (defined here as death or outmigration). My landscape photography visualizes the space afforded to Chicanxs in Michigan,

fabricated by the state to be marginal in the metaphorical "American Dream."

The camera is often thought of as an extension of the hand. So, too, are our experiences of cartography and infrastructure embodied. As a Michigander, I have always used my hand to show people where I'm from in the Lower Peninsula. As noted by the New York Times, "Up North" is a common reference to the state's upper-half. Though the imagined border varies for everyone, many residents use the term to indicate their travels to the state's less-industrialized north for vacationing or hunting. The majority of the state's Black and Latinx populations, however, reside in cities within the inferred "south" of the state. As the state was established during the 1800s, its infrastructure repeats the Civil War era's north/south binary.

Mid-Michigan comprises the "Tri-Cities" of Saginaw, Bay City, and Midland. County lines exist among the farmland surrounding each of the cities. These Tri-Cities were among some of the state's earliest establishments as they were halfway stops along the journey north on the Native American *Saginaw Trail*.[2] Leveraging the Saginaw River, Saginaw and Bay City's economies thrived well into the twentieth century by partaking in fur trading, lumber, fishing, agricultural, shipbuilding, and automobile industries; meanwhile in Midland, brine extraction would lead to the emergence of competing chemical companies that ultimately became Dow Chemical Company, whose world headquarters remain in the city to this day. The north and south of Mid-Michigan is bifurcated by the I-75 Interstate expressway, as the Zilwaukee Bridge hoists the expressway over the northern-flowing Saginaw River that historically connected Saginaw and Bay City.

Black and Latinx populations are present throughout Saginaw's history and its earliest recorded Black residents date to the 1830s. Alternatively, Bay City and Midland resemble many other Michigan cities as they have historically been and remain predominantly white. According to the 2010 Census, over half of Saginaw's population identified as Black or Hispanic, whereas over 94% of Bay City's population identified as white. In both cities, residents of color have historically lived either concentrated within the city or dispersed among the counties' ruralities.

Mexican migration to Mid-Michigan was first facilitated by agricultural employers recruiting labor from the border regions of Mexico and Texas in the 1910s. Among these migrants were my late Grandma Eva Lugo and her family who lived and worked on a pickle farm in rural Mid-Michigan. Companies like the Michigan Sugar Company enticed their prospects with the offer of a train ticket and housing, although these costs would ultimately and sometimes unknowingly be deducted from their wages.[3] The housing provided by their employers were known as "Mexican migrant camps," and poor housing conditions of the camps in Saginaw were documented by the Farm Security Administration in the 1940s. Camps were scattered throughout rural Mid-Michigan and anchored their residents to the fields. Though defunct today, some remain standing and prove how residents were spatially disjointed from the city. At the *Mexican Migrant Camp by Meijers*, for example, there are no homes within a half mile radius and City Hall is four miles away. It would take over an hour to walk to City Hall from the camp in the unlikely event that a migrant without citizenship would take legal action against their employer/landlord.

Indeed, agricultural employers did not assist migrants in obtaining citizenship, and their

contemporaneous agricultural practices exposed fieldworkers to toxic chemicals. Amid the Great Depression, Mid-Michigan's Mexican population had been decimated by nearly 75%. After local opinion and public newspapers blamed Mexican migrants for stealing jobs from Americans, many agricultural employers deported their recruits.[4] The quarter of the population that remained were barred from accessing Depression-era federal relief programs, which catalyzed grassroots collectives like Saginaw's Union Civica to establish community and help migrants obtain citizenship. By the end of the Depression, these same employers returned to the border to recruit again after local farmers could not secure sufficient labor.[5]

How we view the landscape around us impacts our understanding of place. The physical spaces we do and do not engage with, the people we do and do not see in these places, and representations of places in media all influence our understanding of them. Thus, one's understanding of place is rooted in their positionality to it. Agricultural employers in Michigan marginalized Mexican migrants and their needs through space. Unlike contemporaneous federal redlining practices that located and limited the movement of people of color, migrant camps that were isolated from the city made the presence of their residents peripheral. The migrant camps intentionally placed among Mid-Michigan's ruralities remained out of sight and mind to residents closer to the city.

Migrant camp placement and redlining both shaped Michigan's infrastructure and minimized the agency of communities of color. Governmental redlining practices of the 1930s have crystalized the social landscape of Mid-Michigan's industrial era. Then as now, most of Saginaw's residents of color live around or east of the Saginaw River. This phenomenon occurs across the state as rivers serve as the racial divide in cities like Benton Harbor, Grand Rapids, and Battle Creek. Saginaw is also among the nation's most segregated cities, along with several other southernmost, post-industrial Michigan cities like Flint and Detroit.[6] Lingering racial segregation in cities like Saginaw and Flint leave their communities of color spatially out of sight and subsequently out of mind to their neighboring predominantly white cities/counties.

My paternal and maternal great grandparents on my Mexican side took this train ride north in the 1930s to Saginaw's now-defunct Potter Street Station. This train station was known in its heyday as the Ellis Island of the Midwest and was designed by the same architect behind New York City's first skyscraper, Bradford Lee Gilbert.[7] The neighborhood surrounding the train station became home to many of the Black and Mexican migrants settling in the area and received a "red" grade when surveyed by the federal Home Owners' Loan Corporation in 1937. My grandpa was born in his family home a few blocks from Potter Street Station.

Such train rides north from Mexico to Michigan were traveled by the likes of Diego Rivera for his 1933 Detroit Institute of Arts mural commission, which depicts industrial labor of the time at the birthplace of Fordism. Indeed, the demand for labor in the automobile industry also brought many Latinx and Black migrants of the First and Second Great Migrations.

The General Motors (GM) Grey Iron Foundry opened just blocks away from Potter Street Station in 1919. My grandpa and his father both worked for GM until retiring. In the industrial workplace, employers were

again responsible for the marginalization of their Latinx and Black employees. They were typically given the lowest-paying and most physically demanding jobs, and were often denied promotions enjoyed by their white coworkers regardless of seniority. Such practices were common throughout the Midwest auto industry (with nearby Flint's locale coining the term "GM Crow"[8]), but also took place in other industrial workplaces like the steel industry. Nonwhite employees often felt ostracized by their white counterparts, some recalling eating lunch outside to avoid criticism about what they ate.

These towers also delivered Detroit's Motown and the music of Stevie Wonder to his childhood home near the Foundry; They also transmitted ? and the Mysterians after "96 Tears" was picked up by a disc jockey in Flint. Despite the distance, cultural events and music brought communities of color together. My grandpa remembers his dad singing in Spanish and playing the guitar he brought from Mexico in their family home; and bars frequently hosted dances with live music, some with mariachi bands. My grandparents met because they each had a brother in ? and the Mysterians. They are remembered as one of the country's

I always knew my way home among the flat landscape because I lived near three 1,000 foot radio towers. Built during my grandpa's early childhood in the 1940s, these towers are responsible for nearly all of Mid-Michigan's news and radio communications.

first garage bands and in 1966 became the first Chicanx band with a #1 Billboard hit. The band's success earned them a national tour, which my grandpa joined in the summer between graduating high school and starting his job at the Foundry. He has

fond memories of traveling the country and meeting The Yardbirds and Diana Ross.

With his earnings from the foundry, my grandparents purchased a house among the fields of Saginaw's outskirts. My grandma wanted to "get out of the city" and my grandpa has enjoyed the freedom to play music as loud as he pleases. Uncoincidentally, the house they purchased was directly across from a migrant camp that was later torn down. After moving in, my grandpa converted the garage into the "Serrato Family Room," complete with a bar, pool table, his record collection and speakers, a drumset, and, of course, side paneling. The Family Room has hosted decades of family gatherings.

Places like Mid-Michigan complicate the narrative that rural areas favor populist movements because their communities of color have limited political agency and representation. Michigan was among the hardest hit by the globalization of the auto industry, especially in recent memory through the shortcomings of the 1994 North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). In the New York Times article, interviewed Mid-Michigan residents cite such post-industrial financial crises as their reasoning to support former president Donald Trump.

During his first presidential campaign, Trump stated, "It used to be the cars were made in Flint and you couldn't drink the water in Mexico. Now the cars are made in Mexico and you can't drink the water in Flint."[9] Yet, Genesee County, the home county of Flint, never voted for Trump. Two Michigan cities with significant and historic Latinx populations, Saginaw and Traverse City, were among the few counties in Michigan to flip during the 2020 Presidential Election.[10] While the election saw a historic nonwhite voter turnout, populist backlash has nonetheless insisted that such votes were "fake." Additionally, people of color living in Michigan have experienced the worst end of industrialism long before NAFTA. Dangerous working conditions in factories and fields damaged their bodies. Without economic mobility in the workplace, many could not accrue wealth, remaining in the loop of generational poverty. Legislation like NAFTA has merely relocated the raced labor complex that had existed in Saginaw to lesser developed countries, reproducing the conditions that make peripheral the labor of people of color from the perspective of those in the United States.

Such racialized structural inequities were realized in real-time during the pandemic when vaccine rollout was administered by the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services on a tiered timeline. The second phase of vaccine rollout, intended for residents over the age of 65 and essential workers external to healthcare, was delayed by one month in Saginaw, Genesee, and Kalamazoo Counties. These counties house significant, and segregated, Black and Latinx communities, who are disproportionately more likely to have underlying health conditions and occupy the essential workforce. My grandpa, whose house is within a mile of Saginaw's county line, scrambled between health departments

trying to secure a dose. This month-delay could have and likely did contribute to the erasure of communities of color embedded in Michigan's infrastructure.

Public schooling is another infrastructural system that has marginalized people of color in rural Michigan. In 2013, Saginaw's significantly Black and Latinx Buena Vista Township was left to dissolve its entire public school district. The district's close proximity to GM plants facilitated economic fallout in the decades preceding its dissolution.[11] Many other schools in predominantly Black neighborhoods have also closed as a result of the Local Government and School District Accountability Act, the top-down state legislation intended to recoup losses of public schools in financial distress.[12] The city continues to look forward, however, as Saginaw elected its first Latinx state representative, Vanessa Guerra. When elected, Guerra was the youngest-ever member of the Michigan House of Representatives.[13] Her agenda has prioritized education and marginalized communities in Saginaw.

As Michigan enters another significant election cycle, pragmatic working class praxis must contend with the raced history of labor in the United States. When our communities are invisibilized through space and time, they and their more urgent crises are forgotten in collective understandings of the public sphere. The invisibility of people of color in rural areas can be rectified through the recognition of our historic presence and adequate political representation that grants us agency over the structural inequalities we experience. Visualization is only half the battle, those we share space with must respect our role as members of the collective public sphere.

Places like Mid-Michigan complicate the narrative that rural areas favor populist movements because their communities of color have limited political agency and representation.

COMMUNI
DESIGN:

By **Sebastián Meltz-Collazo**

Henry Klumb, reading in a hammock on the porch of Casa Klumb. © AACUPR – Archivo Arquitectura y Construcción Universidad Puerto Rico.

TY BY

ON THE LEGACY OF CASA KLUMB IN PUERTO RICO

ARCHITECTURE & SPATIAL POLITICS

At least once a month, I find myself jumping on Google Maps to glance over my home in Puerto Rico. Navigating from above and using street views, my nostalgia and curiosities about city planning manifest themselves as I recall my own memories and those of others. One day, hovering over the historic neighborhood of Rio Piedras, I noticed a large, unmarked patch of land in the middle of a residential area. Naturally, I sent a screenshot to my dad, whose decades of work as a location scout has tattooed a map of the island on the back of his hand. “Chico, remember when we used to go to church in Carolina? What you’re looking at is right past that strip mall with the fancy lamps and ceiling fans; you take a left just before the overpass. That’s where Henry Klumb’s house is.” I switched from maps to images and found what reminded me of Mies van der Rohe’s Farnsworth home in Plano, IL. Only this was made of wood rather than steel, and it’s hidden within a dense forest in the Caribbean.

Considered a central figure within the island’s architectural history, Henry Klumb was a modernist designer from Germany who lived and worked the latter half of his life in Puerto Rico. While he is primarily known for designing public university campuses and many of its buildings, Casa Klumb is the architect’s most personal work, serving as a blueprint and invitation to think of work as a collaborative, lifelong effort towards social progress.

When Klumb arrived by invitation in the 1940s to work on designs for a modern, post-war Puerto Rico, most buildings emulated the ‘birthday cake’ looking structures of the Spanish Revival or Art-Deco designs. Being born and raised in Germany, where structures tend to have

many rooms and walls to create warmth through insulation, he was dumbfounded to see that these same principles were being used for buildings in a tropical climate. So Klumb paid close attention to the elements that living in the Caribbean implied: the blazing sun all year round, coastal breezes blowing through towns, the natural barriers that palm tree lines created, the constant battle with humidity, and the overall warmth these conditions imbued in Puerto Rican society. Klumb broke away from the historical architecture in place and presented a new language using elements such as vertical lines, large, open, and constantly flowing spaces, and minimalist detailing. But unlike the German and American schools of thought he came from, Klumb wasn't interested in designing sterilized or entirely characterless structures.

As he began working on the university campus in Rio Piedras, Klumb bought a ranch nearby that would become his home. With the main structure already built, Klumb renovated the 19th-century wooden house using this modernist language, insisting on his belief in a more socially conscious design by introducing nature into the spaces. He got rid of all the exterior walls, exposed most of the rooms to the surrounding green coverage, designed all of his furniture to be mobile, so he could move with the sunlight throughout the day, and integrated gardens with bodies of water and palm trees around the central structure. In a collaborative effort with his wife, Else Schmidt, the house became a study in which they focused on how to further create dynamics for human interactions within a space by ways of using materials native to the community they were living in.

After the architect's tragic death in 1984, the ranch was acquired by the University of Puerto Rico. And although it slowly became a ruin due to lack of use and maintenance—in addition to past hurricanes—Klumb's proposals continue to inspire beyond his architecture. About 25 years after Klumb's passing, the artist Jorge Gonzalez peeked through the gate and grew interested in the

...the house became a study in which they focused on how to further create dynamics for human interactions within a space by ways of using materials native to the community they were living in.

seemingly abandoned house. During his first visits, the then gardener and landscaper met Agustín Perez, the caretaker of the ranch who was approaching his retirement. Through Perez, the artist was able to access the memory of this place, learning about the lifestyle Klumb proposed. As he learned about the garden's design and its relationship to the house, Gonzalez grew keen on the values of social consciousness and collaboration being expressed, rather than the architecture itself.

"I connected with his ecological mindset, the idea of having the community at the center and connecting with people organically. Klumb would have people over and use the space as he intended, to produce conversations and new designs that would benefit those around him. He'd play dominoes with the neighbors and work with local artisans. His take on modernism intertwined his life with his work so much; his home has that magic to create the interactions he sought. It all comes full circle."

As Perez's retirement was around the corner, Gonzalez decided to take upon himself the task to continue conserving the memories and legacy of this home. As a product of a six-month residency in which he worked with Perez maintaining the gardens, Jorge made a film titled *Understory*, which is an ecological concept that refers to the growth of plants under the tree canopy. A collection of long takes observe the various parts of the garden encompassing the property. Gonzalez understands these as the space in which the conversations between Agustín Pérez and his then landlord and friend take place.

Having presented this film to Beta-Local in San Juan, Gonzalez learned of Klumb's beliefs in de-scholarization. Klumb wasn't closely tied with the university's school of architecture because he didn't think that architecture was something to be learned at school, rather it's a discipline learned through the process of using the materials needed to get to a design. Since then, Gonzalez's work has broadened in its process and reach: from hosting conversations at Casa Klumb in hopes of collecting oral histories, to creating an "Escuela de Oficios," or trade school, in which he identified and collaborated with master craftsmen and artisans in order to offer workshops while preserving traditional practices and designs (which lead to many of Klumb's own projects in his time). And in 2014, in an effort to bring light to the deteriorating historical landmark, a project was devised in which 30 artists and designers were invited to make work inspired by Klumb's legacy and how it shaped their own practices. Indeed, the Klumb House

has expanded out of its dense forest in Rio Piedras. Something that not even Google Maps can point out in its entirety.

Today, such collaborative practices and dynamics continue to bear fruit in the design and arts industries in Puerto Rico. But as we are well aware of the natural realities and political atrocities that occur in this country, every structure in the tropics meets its end at some point in the conditions of this hostile and macabre geography. This is an island where humidity and elections are not forgiving through time unless you constantly take care of things.

The text you have read to this point was written in the fall of 2020. While conducting research and conducting interviews to write this article, on November 11, 2020, I awoke to images of Casa Klumb as it burned the night before. With my pencil and papers full of notes still scattered on my bed, the pictures of the fire took center stage and burned everything I had learned over the past two months. Still unable to believe it, and at the same time not surprised by what had happened, I remembered the words I had heard, just a few days before, during an online talk by artist Sofía Gallisá: "The dynamic between climate and memory in the tropics is one in which nature imposes a sense of impermanence." If we think about the essence of a house, impermanence as a concept goes against the home. As human beings, we seek permanence, a sense of community that creates the image of home for each of us. But Puerto Ricans know well that permanence is rarely our reality. As soon as I arrived on the island, I went to take pictures of what was left of the house. When I looked for the piece of land in Rio Piedras using Google Maps to get there by car, I noticed that it was marked as a historical landmark after the fire: "Casa del Arquitecto Henry Klumb." The irony filled me with frustration and sadness as I crossed the avenues. I hopped over the fence, and reached the base where there were remnants of the columns and other structural pieces, burned and bent under the intensity of the fire. I looked up at the

cover of the trees, the flowers, and the fruits that were growing as if signaling that there is still life within death.

A few weeks after visiting the ruined Klumb House, photos of another home began making the rounds on social media. Near a farm in Adjuntas, our beloved Jorge Gonzalez had been building a house for some time with his teacher and collaborator, Edwin Marcucci. "The house arose thinking about the Whitney show, in which I participated before the pandemic. The word 'Wasichay' [which was part of the title of that show] means to build or create a house. Then, being in the house, both during the hard part of the pandemic, my residence became a living and working space." By 2020, the artist no longer had the institutional support to continue working at the Klumb House, where he had found his inspiration for his projects since his first encounter with it. As COVID-19 cases fell and restrictions became more flexible, Gonzalez began to reflect on building a house from scratch, as a catalyst and motivation to organize a continuation plan for his Escuela de Oficios. Keeping in mind that space can encourage learning craftsmanship and reflecting on construction techniques, Jorge dedicated himself to the next step of his ongoing process as an artist, as a member of the communities to which he belongs.

Upon completion of construction, the new house in Adjuntas hosted several events around the values that Gonzalez's work carries. And although this house is not directly related to Klumb's, the house in Adjuntas breathes Klumb's will and values. Gonzalez mentioned that someone had seen it as a shrine to the Klumb House in a way. Perhaps we can see it as a new manifestation of Gonzalez's Understudy project: the new structure being what has grown under the umbrella of the German's teachings in Puerto Rico. Whether it was the fault of the relentless forces of nature over time, or the frustrating bureaucracy of the institutions responsible for it, the legacy of the Klumb House lives on through a community of artists, historians, and friends who share the architect's values; seeking to save and restore what remains. My hope is that, as a community, we can continue to find ways to build and grow together; to find permanence.

COUNTERNA

&

ARRATIVES

ACTIVISM

THE LATIN LEGACY

By Néstor David Pastor

N MUSIC

The Porto Rico Brotherhood of America Junta Directiva 1928.
Courtesy of Gerry Glass.

OF RALPH PÉREZ AND ANSONIA RECORDS

COUNTERNARRATIVES & ACTIVISM

AUTHOR'S NOTE:

The following essay was originally published as part of a series exploring the untold history of Ansonia Records, an independent, family-run music label which was founded in New York City in 1949. The Ansonia catalog, recently digitized, boasts an impressive and influential collection of Puerto Rican jibaro music, Dominican merengue, and other folk and popular music genres from throughout Latin America. Further research will no doubt uncover the role Pérez and the Ansonia label played in the development of Latin music within the recording industry.

The four-part series includes "Ansonia Records and Dominican Merengue's Place in Latin Music History" by Jhensen Ortiz and "¿Conoces este disco de papi con Johnny Rodríguez y su trío?: Ansonia Records and Puerto Rico [Part I] and [Part II]" by Mario Roberto Cancel-Bigay. Both articles can be accessed on The Latinx Project website.

INTRODUCTION

Rafael "Ralph" Francisco Pérez Dávila was a pioneering figure in the American recording industry, first as an A&R representative traveling extensively throughout the Americas, and later, as the owner of his very own independent, family-run music label, Ansonia Records, which provided an early and enduring soundtrack for the Latin community in New York City, from the 1950s onwards and catered, in particular, to the growing Puerto Rican colonia. With Ansonia Records, Perez captured the sounds of the Caribbean, Spain, South America, and beyond; boasting a catalog of legendary musicians such as Arsenio Rodriguez, Rafael Cortijo, Angel Viloria, Ernestina Reyes, Noro Morales, Mon Rivera, Myrta Silva, Blanca Iris Villafañe, El Trío Vegabajeño, and Ramito, to name a few. What follows is a modest biographical sketch exploring Pérez's unknown, yet far reaching legacy.

EARLY YEARS

Pérez was born on January 29, 1899, in the coffee growing region of Yauco, Puerto Rico.[1] Growing up during the transition from Spanish to U.S. colonial rule, Pérez initially studied to become a teacher, but ultimately decided to seek opportunity outside of the archipelago. On June 9, 1920, a 21-year-old Pérez boarded the S.S. Coamo for the seven-day journey to New York City, where a modest, but growing Puerto Rican community had settled during the post-WWI Interwar period—a migratory process facilitated by the 1917 Jones-Shafroth Act, which imposed statutory citizenship on Puerto Ricans. Pérez soon began a career in the recording industry working with Edison Records and Columbia Records, before briefly moving to Chicago to work for the Brunswick Company.

Around this time, Pérez met his future wife, Perla Violeta Amado, a Guatemalan-born soprano who achieved international fame as a dancer, singer, and recording artist. In addition to touring Europe and the Americas, Amado released music for major labels such as Decca, Columbia, and Brunswick, appearing alongside leading contemporary Latin American artists such Jorge Escudero, Margarito Cueto, Enric Madriguera,[2] and Lorenzo Herrera. Amado would later re-record some of her earlier releases for

Ansonia Records, and contributed liner notes for albums released by the label.

The couple returned to New York City and married in 1933. By then, Pérez was making recording trips for Brunswick to San Antonio, Texas, where "a huge push to record Mexican music was underway" (Huber & Ward, 2018: 73).[3] A studio was set up in the famous Gunter Hotel, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Legendary blues artist Robert Johnson recorded one of his two historic sessions at this location in 1936. Perez is credited in *The San Antonio Light* as "the gentleman largely responsible for the current American rage for languid Mexican songs and exotic Cuban rumbas..." (Huber & Ward, 2018: 43).

Joining the newly created American Division of UK-based Decca Records, Pérez traveled extensively to build the label's Latin music catalog and is even credited for developing the Latin repertoire of Bing Crosby, a.k.a. "El Bingo."[4] Ultimately, he became the head of the Latin division and an early advocate for the folk and popular music of the region. In 1934, Pérez and Amado's only daughter, Mercedes "Tati" Pérez Amado was born, receiving mention in a newspaper clipping from *La Prensa* under the headline "Perla Violeta Amado tiene una niñita." It was common for Amado, who is described as a Central American vedette, to appear in local coverage highlighting her travels and performances. As president of the Celebratory Committee for the Porto Rican Brotherhood, which formed in the early 1920s, Pérez may have also enjoyed a modest profile as a civic leader. Puerto Rican social and political clubs were common during this period as a resource for the nascent Puerto Rican community, which required support in the face of virulent discrimination and neglect. Civic duty appears to be a lifelong commitment of Pérez, as he appears in a 1957 photo along with community leaders in Miami, where the caption states their intention to address the needs of the local Puerto Rican community. A 1967 newspaper advertisement for PanAm also suggests that Pérez, who claims to travel to the island "15 to 20 times a year," maintained a strong connection to Puerto Rico via la Guagua Aérea.

TRINIDADIAN CALYPSO

Before launching Ansonia Records, one of Pérez's most celebrated endeavors was a series of annual recording trips to Trinidad which took place between 1938 and 1940.

In 1934, Eduardo de Sá Gomes, a Portuguese businessman who had relocated to Trinidad, sent two leading Trinidadian calypsonians to New York City to record for ARC (American Record Corporation). The success of these recordings led Jack Kapp, who left ARC in the summer of that same year, to strike a deal with Sá Gomes to continue releasing calypso recordings under the newly formed American division of Decca Records. Between 1935 to 1937, Trinidadian calypsonians traveled to New York City to record, in the process gaining notoriety thanks to nightclub performances and radio airplay. The growing popularity of calypso led the RCA Victor label to record calypsonians in Trinidad in 1937. In response,

Pérez decided to set up a Decca recording studio in Port-of-Spain at 58 Frederick Street, in partnership with Sá Gomes. The studio was advertised in the *Port-of-Spain Gazette* as the most modern in the country and illustrates the rivalry that had developed between Decca and RCA Victor. Last minute preparations allowed for Pérez and his recording engineer, Monroe Wayne, to also incorporate Guyanese, Grenandian, and Venezuelan musicians who were also invited to Trinidadian carnival, into the 1938 recording sessions. Pérez and Wayne arrived via steamship in early February, just before the famously intense musical competitions that take place during carnival season in Trinidad. Pérez was given full authority to record the best local musicians, which extended beyond the calypso genre and included spirituals, African war songs, and Venezuelan joropo, among other genres.

Censorship, however, was a concern. To be able to release recordings in Trinidad, one of the main target markets for Decca's calypso series, song lyrics had to be submitted by Pérez to the Colonial Secretary for approval. Dick Spottswood writes that British colonial censors "wanted to control the political element of topical calypsos, supposedly as a means of maintaining law and order." Musicians were allegedly paid $10 per song (approximately $200 present-day), plus royalties. Pérez and Wayne would return to Trinidad for carnival season the following year, this time setting up a studio at 44 Marine Square. It appears that Pérez did not return for the third trip in 1940, which took place in the same location, but was marred by poor recording quality likely due to technical problems.

Pérez did, however, put his knowledge of Trinidadian music and culture to use as a prominent source for Joseph Mitchell's article "Houdini's Picnic," which was published in the *New Yorker* in the spring of 1939. The famed American journalist profiles New York City-based calypsonian Wilmoth Houdini while attending a West Indian community gathering on Lenox Avenue and 116th St. in Harlem. Pérez is introduced as a "Puerto Rican of Spanish descent" and guides Mitchell through the evening's festivities. From describing the origins of Calypso to quoting lyrics from the many songs he is tasked with identifying, Pérez is an essential character in the story without whom Mitchell would not be able to provide the rich layer of detail typical of his reporting.

The outbreak of World War II would upend the arrangement between Decca Records and Sá Gomes. Decca Records and the recording industry as a whole would also deal with a shortage in the material used to manufacture records. The Latin division in particular would suffer as the available shellac was prioritized for U.S. recordings. Sá Gomes did send musicians to New York City to record in 1941. The following year, however, outdoor carnival was banned for the remainder of the war and Decca instead began to release older recordings. During this period, Decca would release its first international Calypso hit, "Rum and Coca Cola," composed by Lionel Belasco with

lyrics by Lord Invader—a harbinger of the North American calypso crazy of the next decade.

In 1949, Perez was quoted in *Billboard Magazine* in an article which stated that Decca Records would be investing in new Latin music recordings following a precipitous drop in sales for the Latin division. However, the article also mentions that Latin artists would not be signed to exclusive contracts and that the A&R policy moving forward would be vaguely ad-hoc, meaning recording sessions would take place when "the right tunes and artists become available." Coinciding with the death of Decca Records co-founder Jack Kapp a few months prior, perhaps this was the "writing on the wall" which Pérez's daughter Mercedes references as an impetus for her father to realize his dream of creating his own music label.

THE BIRTH OF ANSONIA RECORDS

Ansonia Records, however, did not begin as Ansonia Records. Its precursor was a short-lived label called Ideal Record Sales,[5] named for a theater in Pérez's hometown of Yauco and located at 1485 Madison Avenue. The company was a partnership with Steven (Esteban) Rodriguez and released 78s of artists such as Orquesta Tropical, Conjunto Ideal, Cuarteto Becker, and so on. By June of 1949, Perez bought Rodriguez's share of the company and became the sole owner. Ansonia Records was born during a time when the Latin music industry was thriving in El Barrio, thanks to the proliferation of record stores and music labels that reflected the musical tastes of the growing Puerto Rican colonia and Hispanic community at-large. Ansonia Records is described as "the last major record company to emerge in El Barrio" (Martínez Torre, 2002: 47). Pérez named his company after a luxurious residential hotel on the Upper West Side of Manhattan where Ansonia housed visiting recording artists and where Perez attended meetings as president of the local Exporters Club. In early January of 1950, it was reported that Pérez had resigned from his position as head of Latin American sales and repertoire at Decca Records in order to focus on Ansonia Records full-time, which is exactly what he did, utilizing his industry knowledge to build an extensive Latin music catalog and record musicians

Ansonia Records was born during a time when the Latin music industry was thriving in El Barrio, thanks to the proliferation of record stores and music labels that reflected the musical tastes of the growing Puerto Rican colonia and Hispanic community at-large.

in studios in New York City, Cuba, Puerto Rico, and Mexico. Ewin Martinez Torres writes that Perez supervised every recording session and ensured that musicians were well rehearsed before entering the studio. To this end, it is worth noting that Ansonia did not provide artist management or produce live shows, relying more so on radio airplay to disseminate their recordings. In the mid-1950s, Ansonia Records moved to a new location on the Upper West Side of Manhattan, at 992 Columbus Avenue. According to Martinez Torres, Perez also launched a second label around this time called Superior Records, which sold 78s and 45s.

LATER YEARS

Ansonia Records was truly a family-run company, with Perez working alongside his daughter Tati and her husband. Like her father, Tati studied to become a teacher before entering the music business. Her husband, Herman Glass, shared a similar background; his family owned a Square Records in Lower Manhattan. Perez mentored both, with Glass eventually taking over A&R duties and Tati overseeing the business side.

Mr. Pérez died in Fort Lee, New Jersey on October 19, 1969 after suffering a heart attack. Ansonia Records would continue operating, eventually moving to New Jersey, where the family had taken up residence decades earlier. In 1985, Ansonia moved to 750 Patterson Avenue, East Patterson, New Jersey, then again to 380 Kamena St, Fairview, New Jersey. In 1986, Herman Glass passed away, leaving his wife and their son Henry Gerard to manage the company. In 1990, a special proclamation was issued by New York City mayor Ed Koch to commemorate the 40th anniversary of Ansonia Records. By that time, there were no new Ansonia recordings released, though some of the catalog was reissued

on compact disc. Mercedes passed away in 2015 and the company was sold in 2019. Since then, Ansonia's vast catalog of LPs has become available online, ending a conspicuous absence from digital distribution and online streaming services. In August 2022, the label released its first new music in decades, an experimental record of Colombian salsa dura by Meridian Brothers.

More research remains to be done on this emerging collection, which includes a sizable amount of Haitian music, in addition to featured artists from Peru, Panama, and other Latin American countries. Overall, it is an underappreciated, unprecedented glimpse into the past with a legacy sustained by the hi-fidelity of the music and the trailblazing vision of Ralph Perez.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Special thanks to Ewin Martinez Torres, Mario Cancel-Bigay, Jhensen Ortiz, Henry Gerard Glass, Liza Richardson, and Souraya Al-Alaoui.


TIRA Y TAPATE

FROM EBO
JET TO VIB

By Janel Martinez

Jet Magazine, 1955.

ONY **AND**
BE,

BLACK LATINA VISUAL MEDIA REPRESENTATIONS PROVIDE A BLUEPRINT FOR LATINX MEDIA

COUNTERNARRATIVES & ACTIVISM

FROM EBONY AND JET TO VIBE...

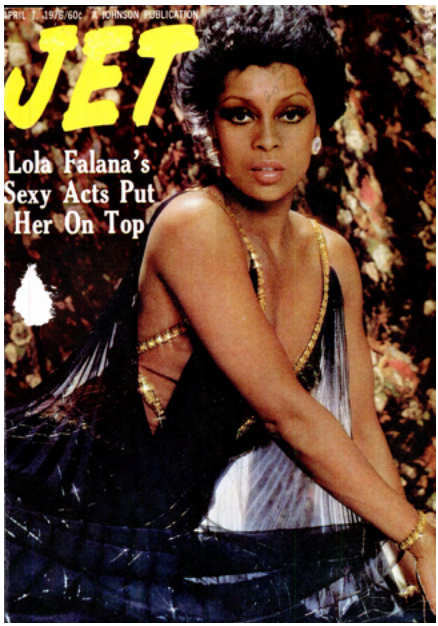
Cardi B, Kelis, La La Anthony, Mariah Carey, Simone Biles, and Zoe Saldaña[1] are among the list of well-known Black women of Latin American descent who have graced the cover of *Ebony*, *Essence*, *Jet* and *Vibe* over the last two decades.

With a nearly 80-year legacy of including actors, activists, musicians, models, performers and creatives from across the African Diaspora, it comes as no surprise that these Black Latina cover stars are prominently positioned on and within the pages of these African-American-founded print publications. However, what's telling about their long-standing inclusion in Black print books is that it would serve as an example for U.S.-based, Latinx women's lifestyle magazines—like *Latina*, which debuted on newsstands in 1996—of the impact of featuring Afro-Latina stars on their covers.

While the motive may be twofold—a data-informed, advertising decision to target more readership with growing discourse on the erasure of Black Latinxs in both mainstream and niche media—Afro-Latina representation in magazines at the time *still* meant something for readers who wanted to see themselves reflected in their monthly glossies. Though there is a slight uptick in Afro-Latinx representation today, the deep hunger for visibility remains; but social media and the larger digital space are filling the void at an accelerated rate compared to existing print media. In fact, a number of magazines have pivoted to solely focus on digital content, even unveiling digital covers like *Latina*'s first-ever digital issue in Spring 2018 with singer-turned-reality star Amara La Negra and, after its return, in 2021 with Michaela Jaé Rodriguez[2], formerly MJ, the first transgender actress to win a Golden Globe. Both pioneering in their own right, these newer visual media representations can't be acknowledged without a closer look at the framework Black print publications set in the mid-twentieth to the top of the late-twentieth century.

A continuum of the Black press heritage, the Chicago-based Johnson Publishing Company founded *Ebony* and *Jet* in 1945 and 1951, respectively, as well as the *Reader's Digest*-esque *Negro Digest*[3], JPC's first publication that ran from 1942 to 1951. Founders John and Eunice Johnson were committed to countering mainstream media's view of African Americans. Historian Brenna Wynn Greer, Ph.D., author of *Represented: The Black Imagemakers Who Reimagined African American Citizenship*, defines John Johnson as a pioneering imagemaker and entrepreneur who leveraged "new technologies, cultural trends, national politics and consumer demands to popularize media images of Black America that represented African Americans against stereotypes and in keeping with the prevailing definitions of Americanness."[4] Though capitalistic gain was the driving force throughout his publishing tenure, Johnson's business acumen altered dominant media depictions of African Americans and the larger Black Diaspora.

An article, titled "Billboard Girl," in the December 1958 issue of *Ebony* reads "The first Negro girl ever to appear as a regular performer on a national television show is 20-year-old Lourdes Altemía Guerrero."[5] "Lulú," as she is often called, was born in what is now Santo Domingo, Dominican



Republic, and is referred to as "Negro"—a term used at the time to describe African Americans. The word choice might be interpreted as an error, given Guerrero Otis' nationality; however, it further solidifies the publication's Pan-African editorial perspective and inclusion of a global Black identity. Prior to this *Ebony* issue, the model and performer appeared on the cover of the imprint in December 1955, as well as *Jet* on April 14, 1955 and March 22, 1956.

The entertainer's inclusion doesn't surprise Timeka N. Tounsel, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Black Studies in Communication at University of Washington. "The Black press has always been concerned with a global sense of Blackness, always understood Blackness and Black identity as not being bound to a specific national context," says Tounsel, author of *Branding Black Womanhood: Media Citizenship from Black Power to Black Girl Magic*. "The way that these Black publications are defining Black dignity is rooted in Africanness, and that's one of the reasons why I think diaspora is so legible and why it almost can be there, even if you don't draw a lot of attention to it. Because this broader ideology of Pan-Africanism, of what it means to be a descendant of Africa, is so popular and so widespread it fits quite easily and naturally into these magazines that are founded in the U.S."

Guerrero Otis is among other Black Latinas, alongside "Queen of Las Vegas" Lola Falana[6] and the Oscar-winning star of *Fame*, Irene Cara, who appeared on the covers of *Ebony* and *Jet* until each ceased print in 2019 and 2014, respectively. While nationality and ethnicity weren't always addressed, in the February 26, 1981 issue of *Jet* featuring Cara on the cover, West Coast editor Bob Lucas notes her "Black-Hispanic heritage" and "Puerto Rican-Cuban ancestry" in the

Afro-Latinxs continue to educate others on the difference between race, ethnicity, and nationality. And, in short, that Black people are not a monolith.

article. Lucas even goes as far as asking the actress and singer if she "feels closer to the Black or White world." She responds:

"We have a tendency in this country that when we say Black it automatically means Black Americans. But that's a big mistake, and that keeps us divided. There are Blacks all over this entire world—*even in Africa*. So there are Black Hispanics…but Spanish people are a nationality, not a race. You have White Spanish people, you have Black Spanish people, you have Indian-looking Spanish people. There are Black French people and Black English people, you know. I happen to be a Black Hispanic person who was born in this country."

While terms like 'Spanish' and 'Hispanic' would be swapped with Latino/x/e and Indian-looking with Indigenous, Cara's message is clear and rings true today. Afro-Latinxs continue to educate others on the difference between race, ethnicity, and nationality. And, in short, that Black people are not a monolith.

One can place Cara's response in conversation with a piece written by author Veronica Chambers almost two decades later. Similar to *Ebony* and *Jet*, *Essence*[7], the premier Black women's lifestyle magazine founded in May 1970, included Black Latinas within its pages. In the July 2000 issue of *Essence*, Chambers pens "The Secret Latina," a firsthand account of the complexities of navigating the world as a Black Panamanian woman. "As a Black woman in America, my Latin identity is murkier than my mother's, despite the fact that I, too, was born in Panama, and call that country 'home,'" she writes. Chambers' words resonate with many Black Latinas whose identity is constantly dissected and put in question. It's also a reminder that these books not only featured Black Latinas but created space to document and define Afro-Latina existence according to their own terms.

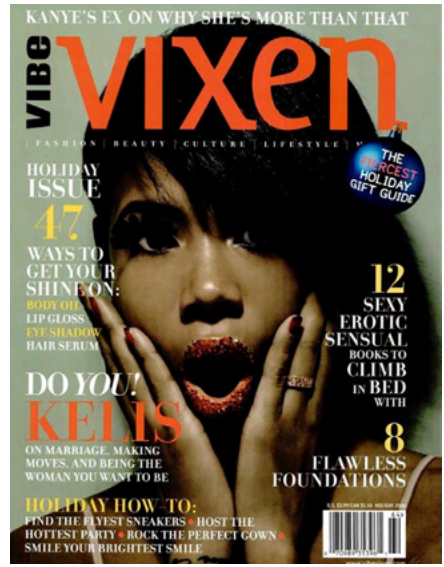
Journalist Mimi Valdés[8] worked her way up the editorial ladder, becoming editor-in-chief of *Vibe* in 2004. During her career at the leading hip-hop music and lifestyle publication, she oversaw the launch of the publication's sister magazine, *Vibe Vixen*. Celebrities like Ciara, Rihanna, and Tracee Ellis Ross graced the cover of the semiannual-turned-quarterly women's magazine before it wrapped print publication in 2007. In the 2006 holiday issue of *Vibe Vixen*, singer-songwriter Kelis addressed her "ethnic background." The cover girl told Kierna Mayo, "My mom is Chinese and Puerto Rican, and my dad is black. We were real close to half of my mom's family—they're brown Puerto Ricans." Though she doesn't get into greater detail, she would later go on to discuss her background in other interviews. However, having an "it girl" of the time share her Puerto Rican roots while the imprint was run by a fellow Afro-Latina

is a vivid example of the power of having culturally conscious media makers involved throughout the creative process.

Afro-Caribbean writer and journalist Marjua Estevez, who grew up reading African American-founded publications such as *Essence* and *Vibe*, is a part of the legacy of media makers ensuring that Black diasporic narratives are amplified, visually and beyond. "I would not be the professional writer I am today, or have had the opportunity to shape such a career in this time and country, were it not for Black American publications like these, which is where I most often felt seen or heard as a first-generation Dominican American," says Estevez, who credits African American cultural institutions and publications for modeling Pan-Africanism. "Women's hair, sense of fashion and style, their bodies and faces in *Jet* magazine, for instance, often most closely reflected those in my own family."

Estevez worked as senior editor at *Vibe*, between 2014 and 2017, and managed the publication's Latinx vertical, Viva. In that position, she would place rising star Cardi B on her first-ever cover in 2016.

"It's a moment and story I hold near and dear to my heart," she says. "When I came across Cardi on social media for the first time, I knew exactly who she was. Marred with imperfection and so-called bad speech. But I understood right away her ethos, her attitude, her energy and recognized she was going to be larger than life somehow. It was absolutely egotistical, I wanted to put her—another Black Dominican woman from Uptown, the Bronx—on a cover. The gift of doing it as early as we did with Vibe is that my time with Cardi was really intimate. We interviewed her and shot her at her grandmother's apartment in Washington Heights, where she had cousins and family just flown in from DR hanging around. She was half naked, no makeup, no wig. She was incredibly shy and noticeably suspicious of me at first because this was her first time doing something like this. But it turned out



to be a really great time and moment not for popular culture, as much as it was for us. I would argue that until it was Black American legacy brands, like *Vibe*, bringing Cardi to the fore, the Dominican community itself, so-called Latinos, weren't rooting for her. On the contrary, she was called ugly, ghetto and unrefined by them in her comments. It took the American co-sign, the proverbial culture, to get the Latin American music landscape to even look at Cardi."

Looking at the current media landscape, Estevez's words are raw but inarguably true. These legacy publications have modeled Black diasporic storytelling for more than a half-century and have created space for Afro-Latinx writers, editors, cover stars, photographers and independent content creators. In turn, it sparked Latinx pubs and platforms to follow suit. While the future of storytelling is still being written, one thing is for sure (as history shows): Black Latinx media representations and stories will always have a place in the archive of print books and the ever-evolving digital space.

"The way that these Black publications are defining Black dignity is rooted in Africanness, and that's one of the reasons why I think diaspora is so legible and why it almost can be there, even if you don't draw a lot of attention to it. Because this broader ideology of Pan-Africanism, of what it means to be a descendant of Africa, is so popular and so widespread it fits quite easily and naturally into these magazines that are founded in the U.S."

PAST IS P

By Neyda Martínez

RESENT:

(Left to right) David Perez, Juan Gonzalez, and Felipe Luciano occupy "The People's Church," 1969. Photo by Hiram Maristany. Courtesy Market Road Films.

THE YOUNG LORDS PARTY REVISITED

COUNTERNARRATIVES & ACTIVISM

PAST IS PRESENT

But whether it be dream or truth, to do well is what matters.

If it be truth, for truth's sake. If not, then to gain friends for the time when we awaken.

Calderón de la Barca, *La Vida es sueño* (1636)

Whether you know his name or not, you owe something to Miguel Ernesto "Mickey" Melendez, born in El Barrio, New York City in 1947: activist, memoirist, first-generation Cuban-Rican, and co-founder of the Young Lords Party.

Despite growing up in the epicenter of wealth and power, Mickey and other Young Lords emerged to call out and confront the root causes of inequality and discrimination with incredible bravado. Effectively, they staged occupations and takeovers drawing attention to social injustice through savvy media coverage and more. Mickey and the Young Lords went on to dedicate themselves to a lifetime of service. Most Young Lords remain lifelong friends, from ages 14, well into their 70s. Their deep bonds were forged in childhood, in neighborhoods, in the streets, and in their actions.

Today, Mickey Melendez looks back on the early 1970s as completely formative. "Being a member of the Young Lords gave me a purpose and an opportunity through collective struggle to give back. What I gained, however, was a profound fulfillment and personal liberation. It's been the most consequential and influential movement I have been a part of in my entire life."

At 74, Mickey Melendez has a modest and calm demeanor, an aura of peace and equanimity. Yet, he's intensely troubled by the resurfacing of all that he spent his youth fighting: worsening inequality; an emboldened far-right; the continuing deadlock surrounding health care; the fatal police shootings of unarmed Black persons, including children; the January 6th attack by pro-Trump rioters on the nation's capital; the death threats Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez has endured, and more. Mickey and other Young Lords recognize that together with younger generations they still have enemies to fight. The principles and values the Young Lords put forth are more relevant than ever.

The experiences that shaped Mickey are enduring ones. His father was a Puerto Rican sailor and card-carrying member of the National Maritime Union, but his greatest influence was the example of his Cuban mother, Celia. A devotee of the Cuban patron saint, La Caridad del Cobre, Celia enshrined the custom of surrounding La Caridad's altar in her home with copper pennies. Whenever times got rough, family members would borrow from La Caridad to buy white rice, eggs and tuna, promising to replenish her as soon as some money or a paycheck made it back into their hands. "This was my first lesson in humility and faith," recalls Mickey. Influenced by the

teachings of his Catholic upbringing as a child, Mickey considered the priesthood. He also witnessed his mother, who spoke both English and Spanish, graciously translate for others in need, especially at hospitals. She cared about others and always stepped up to help in whatever small way she could, modeling a sense of everyday justice, inspiring him to resist bullies. Ultimately, Celia's instinct for protecting others was the primary influence behind the direction his life would take.

Mickey visited Puerto Rico only once as a child when he was four years old. Soon after, his mom moved the family to the South Bronx, on Tiffany Street. Before redlining and urban renewal policies saw an influx of Puerto Ricans to the borough, the Melendez's were only one of two Puerto Rican families in the vicinity. Childhood friends were also first generation Italian, Irish, Polish, and Jewish. They played stickball in the summer and had snowball fights in the winter. The matriarchs reared them the only way they knew how, but out in the world beyond home these kids had to learn to become Americans.

As a child, Mickey and his mother visited Ybor City, a neighborhood in Tampa, Florida where he had his first encounter with overt racism and discrimination. His cousin's nonchalant disdain of Black people shocked

Mickey. He was even more disturbed when he realized that African Americans were only allowed at the local pool only one day a week. The awfulness stayed with him and helped him understand the larger struggle he had begun hearing about in the wider world.

The Civil Rights Movement was by now in full force, and Mickey soon found refuge in the words of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. (MLK), Malcolm X, Don Pedro Albizu Campos, and Cesar Chavez. From their teachings, he learned that the natural order of things in America was being challenged. Mickey came of age at a time when intolerable conditions in the nation's inner cities were protested. He absorbed the meaning behind these uprisings, what MLK famously referred to as "the language of the unheard." The war in Vietnam was unsettling, the fear of being drafted was real. While his friends joined various branches of the U.S. armed forces seeking a way out of poverty, he never forgot how one of his neighbors came home in a body bag.

Acceptance into college provided the solution to avoiding Vietnam and he enrolled in "lily white" Queens College, the least integrated of the City University of New York institutions. Coming back to East Harlem, during the summer of 1967 when he was 20, was a turning point in his political consciousness. A New York Times headline caught his attention: "Disorders Erupt in East Harlem; Mobs Dispersed." In *We Took The Streets*, Mickey shares,

"As I read accounts of the riot along with the shocking state of the living conditions people were forced to

endure in El Barrio, I took it very personally. I felt that I had been lied to for years." Uprisings shook El Barrio following two wrongful deaths at the hands of the police. After years of frustration and disenfranchisement, the residents of El Barrio took to the streets.

Earlier in the decade, in 1964, President Lyndon B. Johnson had signed into law the contentious Civil Rights Act, resulting in a set of programs designed to address poverty and discrimination, or in his words "to create the Great Society." This led to Mickey finding a role for himself as a community peacemaker through a municipally funded summer program. Mickey got to know the East Harlem Tenants Council and members of the "University of the Streets," or Real Great Society on East 110th Street, the most progressive community-based organization in El Barrio. During the same summer, he attended the first East Harlem Youth Council at Columbia University. It was the beginning of his political awakening and also the life-changing moment he met Juan Gonzalez, now co-host of the progressive news program *Democracy Now!*, helmed by Amy Goodman.

The era of Black Pride and Power to the People was politicizing a generation. Immersed in revolutionary dialogues, Mickey and Juan explored taking action to better the adverse conditions Puerto Ricans faced: unemployment and poverty, racism and discrimination. They also discussed the hypocrisy of the U.S. empire holding Puerto Rico as a colony while touting—and supposedly fighting for—peace and democracy at home and abroad. The ethos of the Black Panther Party, seeking freedom and the power to determine their own community's destiny, shaped their emergent ideas.

On June 7, 1969, they noticed a Black Panther paper mentioned a Puerto Rican organization in Chicago called the Young Lords. They immediately drove to Chicago to meet with its founder, José "Cha-Cha" Jimenez. Influenced by the example of Fred Hampton, Chicago's Black Panther Party head, Jimenez and the Young Lords joined the Rainbow Coalition; a street gang was transformed into a politicized youth-based, human rights organization. Cha-Cha gave Mickey, Juan and the others the go ahead to start their own East Coast chapter, which they would rename "the Young Lords Party. "As historian and scholar of the movement, Professor Johanna Fernández shares:

"From the very start, the New York chapter of the Young Lords Party was a political organization. Led by first generation Puerto Rican, college-educated youth they worked alongside other kids and high school dropouts from El Barrio … engaged in education and anti-poverty programs. Together, they rose to confront the racism of institutions from government to religion."

A movement was born; Mickey had found his calling.

A civilization that proves incapable of solving the problems it creates is a decadent civilization.

A civilization that chooses to close its

eyes to its most crucial problems is a sick civilization.

A civilization that plays fast and loose with its principles is a dying civilization.

–Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism* (1972)

Sometimes obscured in accounts of the genesis of the New York-based Young Lords Party (YLP) is the intergenerational guidance and role of women challenging male-dominated hierarchies. Older activist organizers, such as the late Evelina Antonetty, who founded United Bronx Parents in 1965, was a mentor and friend to the YLP. Her sister, Elba Cabrera, recollects vividly: "Yes! Evelina was more than a madrina to the Young Lords, especially their leadership. In fact, she was more like a mother sharing insight, strategic counsel, and even resources to help them obtain a storefront space in the South Bronx."

A grassroots ethos impelled a new generation of organizers to go door to door—listening and learning from frontline communities. The Young Lords absorbed the lesson that the work of dedicated activism is not glamorous nor is it about garnering prestigious awards or public recognition. It is about being of service; caring for your neighbor; building trust relationships and goodwill until enough people believe in the cause and participate in collective action. In other words, people are only ready to seize power once this foundation is established. The Young Lords' empathetic approach entailed being aware of and present to people's real day-to-day challenges.

The Young Lords Party has never gained the mainstream visibility it deserves largely because of anti-communist and anti-socialist leanings on the part of the U.S. government. In the same way that other

successful, highly cooperative anti-poverty empowerment movements have been eclipsed, and left out of schools' history curriculum, later generations would not be taught about their goals, achievements, and legacy. In more specialist circles, however, the YLP are recognized as groundbreaking and exceptional, and their work is studied. Yasmin Ramirez, Ph.D. calls the YLP "a point of origin for Latinx activism in the U.S."

Accessing scholarship about the Young Lords Party requires intentional digging into the alternative movements that are part of U.S. history yet remain obscured. Iris Morales' documentary film *¡Pa'lante, Siempre Pa'lante!* (1996) engaged a broad public on the PBS series POV. In 2015, Dr. Yasmin Ramirez curated. *¡Presente!*

The Young Lords in New York, and in 2019, *Pasado y Presente: Art after the Young Lords*; Universes staged a musical theater piece, *Party People*; and Miguel Luciano's public art intervention, *Mapping Resistance* (2019), centered the photography of Hiram Maristany, a lifelong resident of East Harlem, who was an original member of the Young Lords Party. Anyone interested in learning more about YLP should be aware of the award-winning study by Johanna Fernández, *The Young Lords: A Radical History* (2019).

Amidst the global movement for Black Lives and persistent and rising inequality, momentum gathers for a historical re-examination and reckoning. The most pressing civil rights issues of today such as health care, public education, housing and kitchen-table economics were the same issues the YLP and allies sought to address. As Audre Lorde has written, "There is no thing as a single-issue struggle because we do not live single-issue lives." Therefore, engagement with political education, civics and civil-rights advocacy movements is critical.

The YLP rightly recognized the power of historical education as subject to state control, with school boards able to deny certain histories while promoting others. In his role as the YLP Minister of Health and Political Education, Juan Gonzalez was intentional about decolonizing minds of all ages. Equally important, having observed and listened to the community's needs, the YLP designed creative interventions to command the attention of media and government officials thereby boldly inserting themselves into an unfolding news narrative. Examples include the YLP's occupation of the First Spanish United Methodist Church in East Harlem (renaming it The People's Church) and public health-related campaigns such as the Garbage Offensive, the Lead Poison Detection Program, The Tuberculosis Offensive and X-ray Truck Takeover, and the YLP Inmate Liberation Front in Attica.

Of all these actions, one of the most salient and prescient was the takeover of Lincoln Hospital, a South Bronx facility and institution that had long been condemned by the City. On July 14, 1970, 50 members of the YLP stormed Lincoln Hospital in the South Bronx, known in the streets as "the butcher shop." YLP members drove out the hospital's administrative staff, barricaded entrances and windows, and raised the Puerto Rican flag atop the building, along with a banner proclaiming "The People's Hospital," a nom de guerre still used today. Among their demands—accessible, quality

health care for all.

This historic event is the subject of an acclaimed documentary, *TAKEOVER*, by Emma Francis-Snyder, distributed by The New York Times Op-Docs series. Significantly, the film's release in early October commemorated the second ratification of the Patient Bill of Rights, a direct outcome of the Young Lords' bold occupation. The film dramatically recounts the YLP's direct action protesting the horrific standards of care meted out to their community and raising awareness—way ahead of its time—of underlying social determinants of health, what they called "diseases of poverty," (for example, lead poisoning, tuberculosis, drug addiction, and so on). Their radical analysis pointed to the racist, structural injustices and urban policies to blame while proposing extremely progressive alternative health care modalities even by today's measure for addiction and holistic detox provision. The YLP's contribution to U.S. civil rights is lifted in a spellbinding true story that would otherwise have remained largely unknown. The film's subject matter is anything but past history.

The film serves to remind us of our troubling present. Health care is now one of the largest industries in the U.S., with the CDC reporting that total national health expenditures, as a percentage of GDP, was 17.7 percent in 2018 (and is probably closer to 20 percent today). "The United States is among the wealthiest nations in the world, it is far from the healthiest," according to the National Institute of Health; meanwhile, COVID-19 exposes exactly the kinds of structural injustices that the YLP had identified decades earlier.

New Yorker Emma Francis-Snyder's own roots in activism give her a strong connection to her subject matter and she consciously prioritizes what she calls "an example of direct action that worked." The YLP activists in her film are members of the working class poor, disciplined and highly organized—most of them under 20 years of age—teenagers who changed the course of health care in this country. That such an event could have been forgotten is remarkable.

Rather than present the story as a dry history lesson, *TAKEOVER*'s nod to the Third World cinema-verite movement renders thrilling, "in the moment," period reenactments. By the end of the film many audience members will be wondering why similar actions are not taking place today. In September 2020, the Pew Research Center reported that a majority of Americans hold the belief that the federal government has a responsibility to make sure all Americans have health care coverage. Yet, year after year, and despite the COVID-19 pandemic, there have been no mass protests demanding an overhaul of the system. The U.S. remains an international outlier, with many countries having nationalized health care. Conservative narratives blame individuals for systemic, structural problems. The system is upheld by the special interests of predatory and extractive capitalism, among them the food, big pharma and insurance industries, who buy-off elected representatives co-opting our democracy. Is this a democracy?

By claiming space for one of the United States' most pressing civil rights issues today, *TAKEOVER* jolts our imaginations. But a film 38 minutes long cannot do justice to the intricacy and in-depth level of organizing that led up to the Lincoln Hospital occupation. For example, Cleo Silvers, who started working at Lincoln Hospital in 1967, was a member of both

Conservative narratives blame individuals for systemic, structural problems. The system is upheld by the special interests of predatory and extractive capitalism, among them the food, big pharma and insurance industries, who buy-off elected representatives co-opting our democracy. Is this a democracy?

the Black Panther Party and the YLP. She recalls more than a year of organizing and collaboration leading up to the takeover, intersecting socio-economic and racial lines. Radical and progressive hospital workers formed the Health Revolutionary Unity Movement (HRUM), patterned after Black worker organizer models such as Dodge Revolutionary Union Movement (DRUM) in Detroit. Black and Latino community and workers led, nurses and doctors followed. Silvers points out that "The Lincoln Hospital takeover was not a dramatic event that simply sprung up overnight. The YLP had put in hours of labor, set up a 24-hour complaint table in the emergency room for months, logged more than 4,000 community concerns, and built relationships with workers from hospital administration, doctors, and nurses."

With this story, Francis-Snyder challenges the shortcomings of her own generation's education system that continues to uphold white supremacist narratives and exclusionary structures while suppressing U.S. history's most important chapters. Francis-Snyder has shared that she was dismayed that she had never learned about the Black Panthers and the Young Lords at school and that her knowledge of them did not come until her mid 20s through the advice of an academic mentor. She subsequently chose to focus on the YLP for her master's thesis. After sharing her work with Juan Gonzalez, he suggested she reach out to Mickey Melendez. And, little by little, her objective to make a film that would draw in a wider audience grew one step closer to becoming a reality.

All those steeped in scholarship about mid-century solidarity movements and concerned about the discussion of new laws to prevent the teaching of our truth and radical histories welcome the availability of this story in the video portal of the nation's paper of record. Its short format, suitable for teaching, particularly in schools, could also help promote greater awareness of

how many former YLP members are among us in prominent positions of leadership and professional responsibility. Along with founding members Miguel "Mickey" Meléndez and Juan Gonzalez, (also YLP's Minister of Education and Health) are charismatic Afro-Puerto Rican poet, Felipe Luciano, who was YLP Chairman; and reporter Pablo "Yoruba" Guzmán, who was Minister of Information. Others who cut their teeth in the movement include the founders of the Women's Caucus of the Young Lords Party. Iris Morales, attorney, educator, filmmaker, was YLP's Deputy Minister of Education; Denise Oliver-Vélez, feminist, activist, and applied cultural anthropologist, was the first woman on the central committee of the YLP and Minister of Finance and Economic Development. YLP cadres include a long list of luminaries such as Micky Agret, Vicente "Panama" Alba, Walter Bosque, Gilbert Colón, Gloria Colón, Jose Pai Diaz, Sonia Ivony, Gloria Rodriguez, Hiram Maristany, Myrna Martinez, Olguie Robles, Gloria Santiago, Cleo Silvers, Minerva Solla, and many more.

As interest in the YLP seems likely to grow, forums that are publicly accessible could help to evaluate YLP's place in history with lessons for today's organizers and movements. Politics professor Deva Woodly of The New School continues to be fascinated by "how they developed themselves into a political force, not a static one but an evolving one, and how to meet challenges as they arose." Through their community-based approach to their work, actions, and interventions, the YLP advanced and modeled what political transformation through active solidarity and democratic inclusion looks like in practice. Woodly notes, "Their whole process was deeply democratic and their use of power, politics, and organizing codified knowledge for future generations." Civil rights advocate and environmental justice activist Vernice Miller-Travis grew up enamored by the Black Panther Party and the Young Lords. "I was too young at the time to join them,

Whether movements are infiltrated, destroyed, imploded from within or simply wither away over time, the job is to move forward. And as a society, we need positive examples of resistance to teach and inspire us how to confront injustice and how to create leaderful communities committed to movement building.

but if I could have, I would." She credits her dedication to the needs of historically disenfranchised and under-resourced Black and Brown communities to the YLP's powerful vision for a new world that inspired her own dreams of service to effect social change and justice. As she puts it, "The Young Lords were large and in charge and gave me the sense that you can change things you do not accept."

Francis-Snyder spent a decade making her film because she could not accept the injustice of the YLP's growing obscurity. Mickey Melendez salutes her as a "modern day abolitionist," an ally willing to use her white privilege to "have those conversations with my white brothers and sisters who don't want to listen." Whether movements are infiltrated, destroyed, imploded from within or simply wither away over time, the job is to move forward. And as a society, we need positive examples of resistance to teach and inspire us how to confront injustice and how to create leaderful communities committed to movement building. As Francis-Snyder puts it: "It is my hope that *TAKEOVER* will foster reflection and discussion around how we can unite to make change. It is also a love letter to the activists I so admire. Working on this film, in collaboration with the Young Lords, and especially Mickey, has been one of my life's greatest gifts." By amplifying the work of the YLP, Francis-Snyder hopes to inspire today's emerging organizers.

In Sunset Park, Brooklyn, still only in his mid-20s, U.S. born, Mexican-American activist/organizer Brian Garita is a co-founder and part of a nascent movement called Mexicanos Unidos. Similar to how the Young Lords questioned their own relationship to gender equality, Brian recognizes that being a U.S. citizen along with his male gender affords him a set of distinct privileges. Armed with education and the masters degree he is pursuing at Baruch College in public administration, Brian is determined to use his privilege in service of others.

What's striking about the era in which Garita is coming of age as an activist is the stubborn persistence of inequality. For example, compared to the 1970s when the Young Lords were active and the national poverty rate hovered at 11 percent, today, 13.4 percent of the national population lives below the poverty line, according to the latest data from the U.S. Census Bureau. Like Mickey Melendez, Garita grew up Catholic, and is disappointed that "rhetoric doesn't match action and that in many ways, things have gotten worse." Among his primary concerns are housing justice and gentrification; access to quality and preventative healthcare; inescapable poverty and the plight of the unhoused and the poor; education; worker power; women's rights; the impact of COVID on essential workers; and much more. He has seen how his mother has been mistreated, how the undocumented are abused and wonders as a society why there is such a lack of compassion.

Starting out with less than 10 members, Mexicanos Unidos is just beginning a program of decolonization education, having formed a study group this past winter. The same age Mickey was when he began as an activist, Garita's intentions are local and internationalist, connecting Mexicanos Unidos to Yemen, Palestine, and to Boricuas here and on the island. He is using political education to inspire activism, conducting study circles with titles such as *Open Veins of Latin America* by Eduardo Galeano, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* by Paolo Freire and *The Activist Study, "ARAK"* (or Araling Aktibista, part of the required study for activists in the Filipino revolutionary movement).

Like Francis-Snyder, Garita never once encountered the YLP in his pre-college years education, despite growing up in New York City. Only a few years ago and altogether randomly, Garita managed to obtain a copy of the Young Lords Pa'lante paper—entirely his own journey to access this material. An example of a working class youth for whom the concerns of the YLP still resonate, in the very same city, Garita represents another point of continuity in an ongoing struggle for liberation and justice—a new incarnation of old struggles that endure because the need is still great, if not greater.

On December 10, 2021, Speaker Nancy Pelosi issued this statement marking the 73rd anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which was adopted by the U.N. General Assembly on December 10, 1948:

"Seventy-three years ago today, the international community came together to declare its firm, united and enduring commitment to human rights, stating, 'Recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world.

La lucha continúa.
Pa'lante.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Special thanks to Joanna Rabiger for editing and additional research, and to Tania Lambert for copy editing.

TAKEOVER can be streamed for free via New York Times Op Docs (38 min., USA). The short documentary was directed by Emma Francis-Snyder, produced by Tony Gerber and written by Francisco Bello and Emma Francis-Snyder, with executive producers Market Road Films, Luis Miranda Jr., and playwright Lynn Nottage. The film features period photography by Hiram Maristany, the official photographer of the Young Lords Party in New York; music by Paul Brill; and was edited by Francisco Bello and Sebastián Diaz. Consulting producers are Miguel "Mickey" Melendez and Iris Morales who are former members of the Young Lords Party. The documentary is set to be adapted into a narrative feature from Sister and Market Road Films.

THE LATIN CENSUS R CATEGORY DEBATE

By Tanya Kateri Hernández

NX
RACIAL
Y

AND HOW TO UNITE LATINX ACROSS RACIAL DIFFERENCES

COUNTERNARRATIVES & ACTIVISM

THE LATINX CENSUS

What race are you? For Latinx without a definitive racial identity as Black, White, Indigenous or Asian, this question can generate confusion and even annoyance. While individual identity is a highly personal matter, when a government agency or Census Bureau asks about race, its collection of the answers matter for the nationwide enforcement of civil rights and monitoring of anti-discrimination law violations. At present, the U.S. government, through its Office of Management and Budget (OMB), is proposing to change how Latinx are asked about their racial identity, but the issues at stake will need our attention long after the OMB makes its final decision.

The racial and ethnic classifications that the government devised in 1977 (and revised in 1997) were for the specific purpose of facilitating the application of civil rights laws. By comparing the demographic count of individuals by race to the statistical presence of each racial group in workplaces, housing purchases and rentals, and access to mortgages, racial disparities should be uncovered and then investigated for discriminatory practices. The existing 2023 format first asks whether someone's ethnicity is Hispanic/Latino-Origin, followed by a second question of what is their race (American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Black or African American, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, Other). This two-question format recognizes that within Latino ethnicity there are racial differences.

The OMB proposal under consideration in 2023 will combine both inquiries into a single question of "What is your race or ethnicity?" and collapse Latino/Hispanic ethnic identity into the list of racial categories with Black, White, Asian, American Indian, Middle Eastern, Native Hawaiian. Proposing to insert "Latino" as a category commensurate with "Black" not only situates Blackness as foreign to Latino identity; it also encourages a view of the Black category as only pertaining to non-Latinx in ways that erase the very existence of Afro-Latinx and discourages multiple box checking.

Part of the motivation for proposing the change to a single question format was for the purpose of lowering the number of Latinx who in the past responded to the race question with a write-in response under Some Other Race (SOR) and offered a national origin ethnic identity (like Venezuelan or Boricua, etc.), rather than checking one or more of the existing race boxes. Under the current single-question format proposal, Latinx would instead have the option to simply check Hispanic/Latino. This is a proposal rooted in the idea that it is better to create comfort for some Latinx respondents in their preference to avoid thinking about the relevance of racial appearance, over the needs of racially subordinated Latinx who need to have the racial identity that coexists within Latinx ethnicity also recognized. Importantly, there are other ways to address the complexity of Latinx identity that will not risk erasing the racial count of those Latinx whose racialized appearance leaves no ambiguity about the significance of race in their lives.

For Afro-Latinx and others with dark skin, the race and ethnicity OMB proposal erases how they experience racism compounded by their Blackness. We need data that can

What is your race or ethnicity?
Select all that apply ***AND*** *enter additional details in the spaces below.*
Note, you may report more than one group.

☐ **WHITE** – *Provide details below.*

☐ German ☐ Irish ☐ English
☐ Italian ☐ Polish ☐ French
Enter, for example, Scottish, Norwegian, Dutch, etc.

☐ **HISPANIC OR LATINO** – *Provide details below.*

☐ Mexican or Mexican American ☐ Puerto Rican ☐ Cuban
☐ Salvadoran ☐ Dominican ☐ Colombian
Enter, for example, Guatemalan, Spaniard, Ecuadorian, etc.

☐ **BLACK OR AFRICAN AMERICAN** – *Provide details below.*

☐ African American ☐ Jamaican ☐ Haitian
☐ Nigerian ☐ Ethiopian ☐ Somali
Enter, for example, Ghanaian, South African, Barbadian, etc.

☐ **ASIAN** – *Provide details below.*

☐ Chinese ☐ Filipino ☐ Asian Indian
☐ Vietnamese ☐ Korean ☐ Japanese
Enter, for example, Pakistani, Cambodian, Hmong, etc.

☐ **AMERICAN INDIAN OR ALASKA NATIVE** – *Enter, for example, Navajo Nation, Blackfeet Tribe, Mayan, Aztec, Native Village of Barrow Inupiat Tribal Government, Tlingit, etc.*

☐ **MIDDLE EASTERN OR NORTH AFRICAN** – *Provide details below*

☐ Lebanese ☐ Iranian ☐ Egyptian
☐ Syrian ☐ Moroccan ☐ Israeli
Enter, for example, Algerian, Iraqi, Kurdish, etc.

☐ **NATIVE HAWAIIAN OR PACIFIC ISLANDER** – *Provide details below.*

☐ Native Hawaiian ☐ Samoan ☐ Chamorro
☐ Tongan ☐ Fijian ☐ Marshallese
Enter, for example, Palauan, Tahitian, Chuukese, etc.

measure the existence of racial disparities amongst Latinx. As the Pew Research Center and other researchers have long noted, there are distinct social outcomes based on labor market access, housing segregation, educational attainment, and prison sentencing that vary for Latinx if they are dark-skinned and especially if they are visibly Afro-Latinx. This is not an insignificant population, given the fact that approximately 90 percent of the enslaved Africans who survived the Middle Passage voyage were taken to Latin America and the Caribbean. Moreover, as I methodically document in the book *Racial Innocence: Unmasking Latino Anti-Black Bias and the Struggle for Equality*, too often, Latinx decision-makers deny Afro-Latinx access to jobs, homes, public accommodations and fair treatment in schools, and the criminal justice system.

Expunging racial differences from the examination of Latinx identity leaves us as a society ill-equipped to address the racism that Latinx themselves perpetrate. Even the growing number of Latinx engaged in White supremacist violence is incomprehensible without an understanding that Latinx can be White too. This is evident in the media storm of confusion each time a Latinx like Mauricio Garcia murders someone or conspires to attack the nation's capitol like Enrique Tarrio, all in the name of White supremacy.

Nevertheless, for those Latinx without a definitive racial identity as Black, White, Indigenous or Asian, several dynamics interfere with their ability to become allies in the demand for racially specific data to support the needs of racially subordinated Latinx populations. It is useful to address each in turn.

"I may have light-skin and European features, but I don't identify as White and so I can't check a race box."

This is a perspective that associates White identity as belonging only to Anglos and European immigrant-descended persons. Yet, in Latin America and the Spanish-speaking Caribbean, many residents identify as White on government forms without any angst or the use of a Some Other Race category. In other words, the disinclination some Latinx in the United States may have with acknowledging the relevance of their White appearance is not a Latinx culturally determined discomfort with racial categories, but rather a United States-specific dynamic. Indeed, Puerto Ricans living on the archipelago have a dramatically lower use of Some Other Race as compared to Puerto Ricans within the contiguous United States. For Borikén-based Puerto Ricans, Whiteness is not associated with Ku Klux Klan membership, or the socio-economic privilege of Anglos across the contiguous United States. In Puerto Rico, Whiteness is more an identification with the legacy of Spanish conquest and a reflection of the reality that Whiteness matters in how one is socially positioned.

For other Latinx, the disassociation with the 'White' box is tied to the ways in which they experience and observe U.S.-based xenophobia and discrimination against Latinx for being Latinx alone. Anti-Latinx discrimination makes Latinx Whiteness seemingly less White. Nevertheless, even for those light-skin Latinx who do not personally "feel White" in the United States, their White appearance accords them racial privilege denied to darker-skinned Latinx. And that is a phenomenon that the government inquiry into race is meant to measure and, in turn, address.

"I don't look White or Black. I am Brown and don't see that as a category on the government forms."

Proposing to insert "Latino" as a category commensurate with "Black" not only situates Blackness as foreign to Latino identity; it also encourages a view of the Black category as only pertaining to non-Latinx in ways that erase the very existence of Afro-Latinx and discourages multiple box checking.

In the 1960s, the Chicano movement galvanized a Brown identity aligned with Mexican Indigenous ancestry as a way to articulate how they experienced discrimination and violence at the hands of state institutions as "non-Whites." It is important to note, however, that the notion of Brown is purposely vague to include Chicanos and now, Latinx of any shade. In other words, the Brown label is not a skin-shade indicator but rather a rhetorical device for referencing the discrimination that Latinx experience as Latinx (based on surname, accent, Spanish language usage, citizenship status, etc.). However, this form of discrimination is already addressed with Equality Law provisions that rely upon the census count of Hispanic/Latino ethnic origin.

For other Latinx, "Brown" is an assertion of being inherently Mestizo (as neither Black nor White, nor definitively Indigenous, but a mixture of some sort). In fact, the congressional mandate to continue including a SOR box on the census was instigated by former Representative Jose Serrano, who threatened to block funding of the census unless it included this space for Latinos to express their Mestizo identifications. Yet these Mestizo-identified Latinx do not check multiple racial boxes to indicate the mixture as government forms authorize and invite. They prefer terms of racial ambiguity like Mestizo or country origins entered into the Some Other Race box, that evade association with specific racial origins.

Finally, Brown/Mestizo is also the way in which some Latinx attempt to express how darker skin color, regardless of racial origin, exposes them to discrimination. But what this intuitive communication regarding skin color fails to appreciate, is that skin color stratification is a dynamic that affects many other groups outside of Latinx. Using Brown/Mestizo to convey the relevance of skin color is much too imprecise with the huge spectrum of skin color that can be subjectively included as a result of self-identification being used as the mode of response. "Brown" can mean many things to many people. Social scientists have other

survey methods to more accurately measure the harm that skin color bias imposes across ethnic and racial groups outside of the census race question.

How can Latinx without a definitive racial identity as Black, White, Indigenous or Asian, become allies in the demand for racially specific data to support the needs of racially subordinated Latinx populations?

The way forward cannot be endorsing the idea of conflating ethnicity with race in a single question that risks obscuring the number of Afro-Latinx and the monitoring of existing socio-economic status differences of Latinos across races. Afro-Latinx scholars have a variety of alternatives that are more responsive to how Latinx interact with racial questions. These other options include disentangling questions about ancestry from how others perceive you (known as socially ascribed race). Importantly, these alternatives do not deracinate Latinx and risk erasing the statistical existence of Afro Latinx. The OMB and the Census Bureau should be testing these alternatives and consulting these Latinx experts, instead of imposing the single question format as a tepid mechanism for accommodating the discomfort some Latinx have with considering the significance of race, at the very same time that nations across Latin America have reaffirmed the need for accurate race data collection for monitoring racial exclusion.

Regardless of what the OMB decides, all Latinx would benefit from reflecting on how their personal identities (as human, Brown, Mestizo, Boricua etc.), in all their richness and complexity, can coexist with a socio-political racial identity connected to how one's physical appearance mediates access or exclusion to opportunity. It does not make us racist to acknowledge, on a government inquiry into race, how our racial appearance is perceived by others within a social hierarchy. The first step to dismantling racism is to have data that shows the patterns of inclusion and exclusion as a tool for intervention, while at the same time remembering that no form can ever fully encompass all of what we truly are.

...the disinclination some Latinx in the United States may have with acknowledging the relevance of their White appearance is not a Latinx culturally determined discomfort with racial categories, but rather a United States-specific dynamic.

CRISIS PR

"No a Paseo del Monte... tierras para educar" (Caimito, 2005). Courtesy of AgitArte.

By Jose A. Laguarta Ramirez

OJECTS:

25 YEARS OF AGITARTE IN PUERTO RICO AND THE GLOBAL DIASPORA

COUNTERNARRATIVES & ACTIVISM

"What is it that we're going to do? What's the ima... without ignoring our limitations, but what is our best political imagination towards a completely changed landscape?" Jorge spits out ideas in rapid-fire, colloquial Puerto Rican Spanish, interrupting and correcting himself as he goes, warning me repeatedly to ask him to slow down if necessary.

We're sitting on the breezy front terrace of Casa Taller Cangrejera, a two-story mid-century cement house in a quiet part of Santurce, the barrio of San Juan where Jorge was born and raised, and that serves as AgitArte's workshop and headquarters. Turning fifty in a few days, AgitArte founding member and co-director Jorge Díaz Ortiz is a veteran of many movements—and not just in Puerto Rico, where he returned in 1999 after spending the decade as a college student and community organizer in New England. Growing up in an independentista family, during his time there, he was further radicalized through his work with working-class Latinx and African American communities.

Jorge has just referred to AgitArte's best-known project—its street theater troupe,

Papel Machete (itself an independent group supported through AgitArte's broader Popular Education and Performance Project)—as a "proyecto de crisis." The phrase strikes me as curious, so I ask him to elaborate. He goes on to describe what he calls the "economic defeat of the working class" as a corollary of the austerity measures that accompanied the "fiscal crisis" officially announced in 2006 (the year Papel Machete was founded): "It's a conclusion I've reached, that our work is cheap—papier-mâché—we have no resources… now we have a little bit of resources, we have a space, but we never expected that to happen."

Resources or not, few initiatives have left as much of a lasting imprint on the visual and affective archives of the political landscape of this U.S. Caribbean colony (or "unincorporated territory") over the last quarter century as AgitArte. If nothing else, the image of a giant papier-mâché student towering over a crowd of marchers, or swaying to the beat of the drums in one of the many videos produced during the 2010-2011 student strike at the University of Puerto Rico (UPR), will strike a familiar chord with anyone who has paid attention. El Estudiante Militante is one of several giant puppets produced by Papel Machete over the years.

Street theater, however, is only one aspect of the collective's broad-based and multifaceted popular education efforts. Founded in Lynn, Massachusetts, in 1997, and reinventing itself over the years to meet the demands and challenges of the changing terrain of local and global anti-colonial and anti-capitalist struggles, AgitArte has grown into a number of geographically dispersed projects tied together by a network of "radical solidarity" amongst like-minded artists, activists, and collectives.

Over the summer of 2022—shortly after the collective turned twenty-five—I had open-ended conversations with Jorge and two other key AgitArte members: full-time co-director Sugeily Rodríguez Lebrón, and art professor Javier Maldonado O'Farill (Papel Machete co-founder and member of AgitArte's Board of Directors). From these conversations, I have pieced together a timeline of the period that illustrates how the group's emergence and mobilization of political affect and memory have been intimately entwined with Puerto Rico's ongoing crises up to the present, including the 2019 uprising that ousted governor Ricardo Rosselló.

TO AGITATE YOU/RSELF

As its name indicates, AgitArte (a portmanteau of "agitation" and "art" that also literally translates as either "to agitate you" or "to agitate yourself" in Spanish) was from its origins directly influenced by agitprop theater and poster art. Jorge mentions Bertolt Brecht, along with Paulo Freire, Amílcar Cabral, Antonio Gramsci, the Black Panthers and his own mother—a "revolutionary from the heart"—among his influences. Other self-evident influences include commedia dell'arte, a long tradition of Puerto Rican political poster art, and the radical "guerrilla" theater groups inspired by Augusto Boal's "theater of the oppressed" in the 1960s and 1970s.

AgitArte defines itself as "an organization of working-class artists and cultural organizers who work at the intersections of race, class, gender, sexuality, and ideology." Its members are unequivocal about its anti-colonial and anti-capitalist character. As Sugeily (or Su, as her friends call her) put it bluntly, "We aspire to the *total* decolonization of

AgitArte defines itself as "an organization of working-class artists and cultural organizers who work at the intersections of race, class, gender, sexuality, and ideology."

Puerto Rico" (my italics). As the adjective "total" implies, she envisions transformations beyond juridical independence alone:

> It means being independent from the U.S. and also means *building, from the grassroots* ["*desde las comunidades*"], systems that truly work for us. The possibility of everyone having an education, a roof, food, the ability to live a healthy life, access to healthcare. In general, what I aspire to is a dignified life for us and for coming generations, now. (emphasis mine)

"In other words," I suggest, "a radical change in the economic and political system." "Yes," she replies without missing a beat.

AgitArte's radical politics—already present at the group's origins—were further nurtured by its political milieu in Puerto Rico (or, as Jorge only half-ironically calls it, mimicking academic jargon, its "organizational ecosystem"), composed of various relatively small radical Leftist cadre organizations (including a few other "cultural" initiatives, such as musical groups and street muralists) active within the labor movement, the UPR, and a handful of urban communities during the 2000s and early 2010s. While its own original core consisted of artists and community activists on the "periphery" of this relatively closed "ecosystem," eventually Papel Machete also drew "organized" militants, especially from the youth and student organizations.

Beyond the immediate ideological milieu, crisis conditions during this period led to the proliferation of localized conflicts and movements dispersed throughout the colony. Jorge is emphatic that AgitArte doesn't see itself as "external" to these struggles: "I think Papel Machete *is* a community group. It's just that it's not a *geographic* community." This notion is sustained by a theory of acompañamiento or support for already existing struggles, "in order to amplify their media and arts capacity."

Later, Javi further elaborates this vision with an example. Pointing at the wall behind me, he notes: "[I]n 2008 we did a first tour of that piece shown in that photo up there, *En mi barrio se puede*, our first short puppet piece."

> We went to several communities, but they were spaces that were already organized, where something was already going on… We didn't parachute in to tell folks what to do. Something was already happening, and we just joined, and came out in support, or to agitate if it was something heavier.

He accompanies the point with an anecdote about the surprisingly successful outcome of one such performance, as a result of which the crowd got so riled up, they tore down the makeshift barricade a developer had put up to restrict access to a local lighthouse (except through his restaurant). "We really did agitate [that time]!" he says with a smile.

> questioning. You know, 'look, question this thing that's going on,' and, 'what can we do to change this situation?'

AN EMERGENT TIMELINE

In 1997, Jorge—then a recent graduate of Emerson College with a degree in mass communications—found himself working in Lynn, a working-class city north of Boston,

When I spoke to Su a few days later, she offered several additional examples. We laugh as she tells the story of how Papel Machete members playing "villainous" characters were once chased by a crowd that grew too "passionate." But, she insists, these experiences are *generative* as well:

> [W]hat they do with what they receive from us is part of the work we want to accomplish, which is not just to generate an emotion, it's also generating that

for a nonprofit organization through which he founded his first popular/political theater group. The experience proved to be a valuable education in institutional cooptation. When the higher-ups insisted that the group promote candidates in local elections, "I told them to go to hell and we continued the project, without any money."

From this refusal, AgitArte was born. Remaining active in Lynn through the early 2000s, the group "facilitated creative

workshops, produced street performances, monthly spoken word/poetry/music 'speak-outs,' and cultural events dealing with issues affecting working-class youth and youth of color in the community."

Jorge, however, moved back to Puerto Rico to care for his mom, who had fallen ill and returned to the colony after several years as a community organizer in the Boston area (where she had migrated in 1991, following her college-bound son's footsteps). For the

next year, he was employed by EducArte, an independent nonprofit group financed by a program of the San Juan Mayor's Office. Through this experience, he first came to know the communities of Caimito, a large, historically Afro-Puerto Rican semi-rural barrio of San Juan which, like many other communities at the time, was facing the combined threats of displacement and environmental injustice. Residents had recently posed a partially successful legal challenge to the destruction of the Chiclana quebrada (creek)—one of San Juan's most important natural ecosystems and aquifers.

It was also at this time that Jorge first met fellow santurcina Maryann Hopgood, a professional graphic designer who had given up her successful business to found and direct EducArte. That project, however, came to an abrupt end after San Juan Mayor Sila Calderón won the governorship in 2000, in what turned out to be another abject lesson in electoral machine politics. No longer needing the publicity, the Mayor's Office wrapped up: "In the end they seized all of Maryann's property… they fired everyone, seized all the material."

Not long thereafter, AgitArte Puerto Rico was born, thanks to a three-year grant that Jorge was able to secure. With the help of a community leader he had met through his previous involvement, Jorge developed a popular education program for youth in the most deprived sectors of Caimito. With the program's support, young community residents self-organized protests against displacement and environmental degradation, and painted murals in strategic locations such as bus stops and a concrete wall separating the barriadas from recently built middle-class walk-ups. These projects caught the attention of community leader Haydeé Colón, who approached Jorge, starting a fruitful collaboration.

After the funds sustaining AgitArte's work in Caimito had dried up a few years later, Colón brought Jorge to his first meeting of Santurce No Se Vende. There, Jorge reconnected with his former boss, Hopgood, who was now leading another fight in their mutual home barrio. She and other residents of San Mateo—the Black-founded historical heart of Santurce—faced plans to seize their homes through eminent domain, in order to "revitalize" the area surrounding the brand new Puerto Rico Art Museum (MAPR) by replacing them with luxury towers. Although the fight was all but lost at that point, Jorge and a group of five or so unpaid collaborators from the Caimito project (most still in AgitArte's orbit today), decided to "give it our all, in order to make the most amount of noise possible." At the heart of the effort was the Museo del Barrio, where AgitArte was given office space: Hopgood's family home, refashioned into a public archive of San Mateo's history, and named intentionally to evoke a counter-narrative to the elitist vision behind the MAPR.

Another important piece of Santurce No Se Vende was New Zealand-born mask-maker and puppeteer Deborah Hunt, whose travels throughout Latin America brought her to Puerto Rico in the late 1990s. From Hunt, Jorge and the others learned the papier-mâché puppet- and mask-making techniques that would become Papel Machete's signature style. It was also through Hunt that Jorge first met Su, who had been working with Hunt in the administration of Yerbabruja Theater in Río Piedras, near the flagship campus of the UPR. Su, who had been a student activist at the Cayey campus, would be invited to join Papel Machete in 2009, after several years of collaboration.

The other main ingredient that coalesced with AgitArte to form Papel Machete was

Indymedia Puerto Rico. Founded by former student activists involved in the renewed movement to shut down the U.S. Navy base and live-munition training range on the island of Vieques, Indymedia PR was the local node of the global Indymedia network. In addition to providing an online platform for activists as an alternative to corporate media coverage of protest events, the Indymedia PR collective produced its own original news content in the form of reports and photo essays. Javi first went to a Santurce No Se Vende meeting to report on the movement for Indymedia PR. He and other collective members soon began attending the mask-building workshops, where they mingled with the AgitArte crew. From these interactions, the idea emerged to "do something different on the street" the following May Day, using the techniques learned from Hunt.

Empowered by the success of the anti-Navy movement on Vieques (the base and bombing range shut down permanently on May 1, 2003) and drawing from its occupation tactics and environmental and anti-displacement ethos and identity, Puerto Rico's decades-old beach access movement resurged as well, most visibly in an encampment known as Playas Pa'l Pueblo, which occupied a stretch of the beach in the Isla Verde tourist area where the Marriott Hotel had illegally secured permits to expand its parking lot.

In April 2005, students at the UPR-Río Piedras began a month-long strike against tuition hikes—a much-maligned but ultimately prescient predecessor to the more widely supported UPR strike of 2010-2011. Jorge sees the confluence of the three movements—Santurce No Se Vende, Playas Pa'l Pueblo, and the 2005 strike—as a "historical moment" underlying the emergence of Papel Machete. Javi, who covered all three as an Indymedia PR correspondent, describes it as a "triangle" that allowed him to become more involved in ongoing struggles.

PAPEL MACHETE

After two months of mask-building workshops, Papel Machete saw the light of day on May 1, 2006—International Workers' Day (historically celebrated by Puerto Rico's labor movement, despite the colonial imposition of "Labor Day" in early September). The May 1 demonstrations of 2004 and 2005 had already seen a slight resurgence of confrontational tactics amid simmering labor tensions, the looming fiscal crisis, and the UPR strike. In 2006, it came in the midst of a local government shutdown provoked by a legislative stalemate over a proposed sales tax intended to finance the repayment of Puerto Rico's "extraconstitutional" debt. Legislators from the governor's party favored the percentage proposed by the governor, while those from the other major party favored a different percentage. A large march in late April called for by TV and radio personalities—ostensibly nonpartisan, but supported by the governor's party and largely blaming the opposition—demanded a resolution (a dissident faction of the opposing party eventually agreed to the governor's proposal, ending the shutdown). The Left and the more militant labor unions instead rejected the sales tax altogether as regressive.

It was in this context, and in support of the latter demand, that the still nameless street theater group was brought into the world, with a street performance, titled *Los vividores del pueblo*. The piece involved five cabezudos (characters played by performers wearing large papier-mâché heads)—Government, Banking Sector,

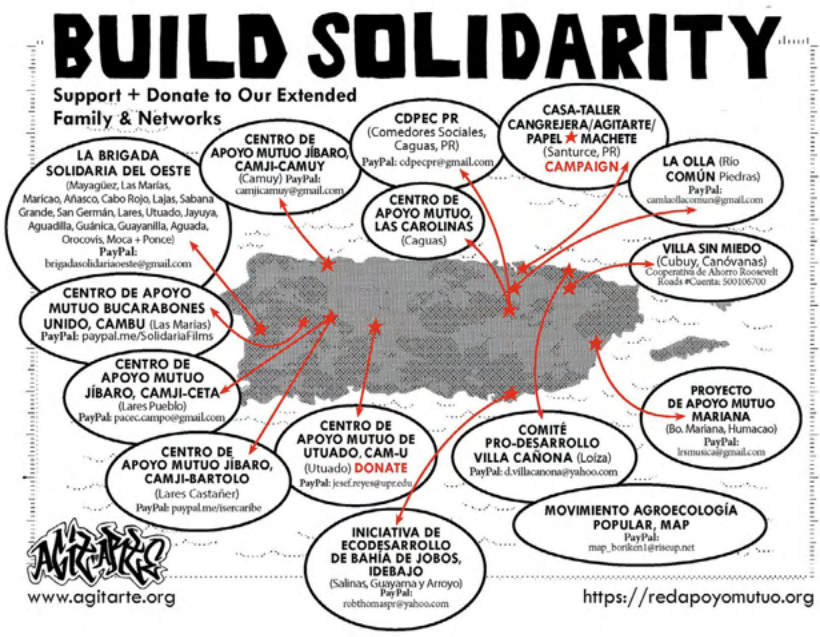
Developer, Church, and Corporation—who "live[d] off the people" and were responsible for the financial crisis.

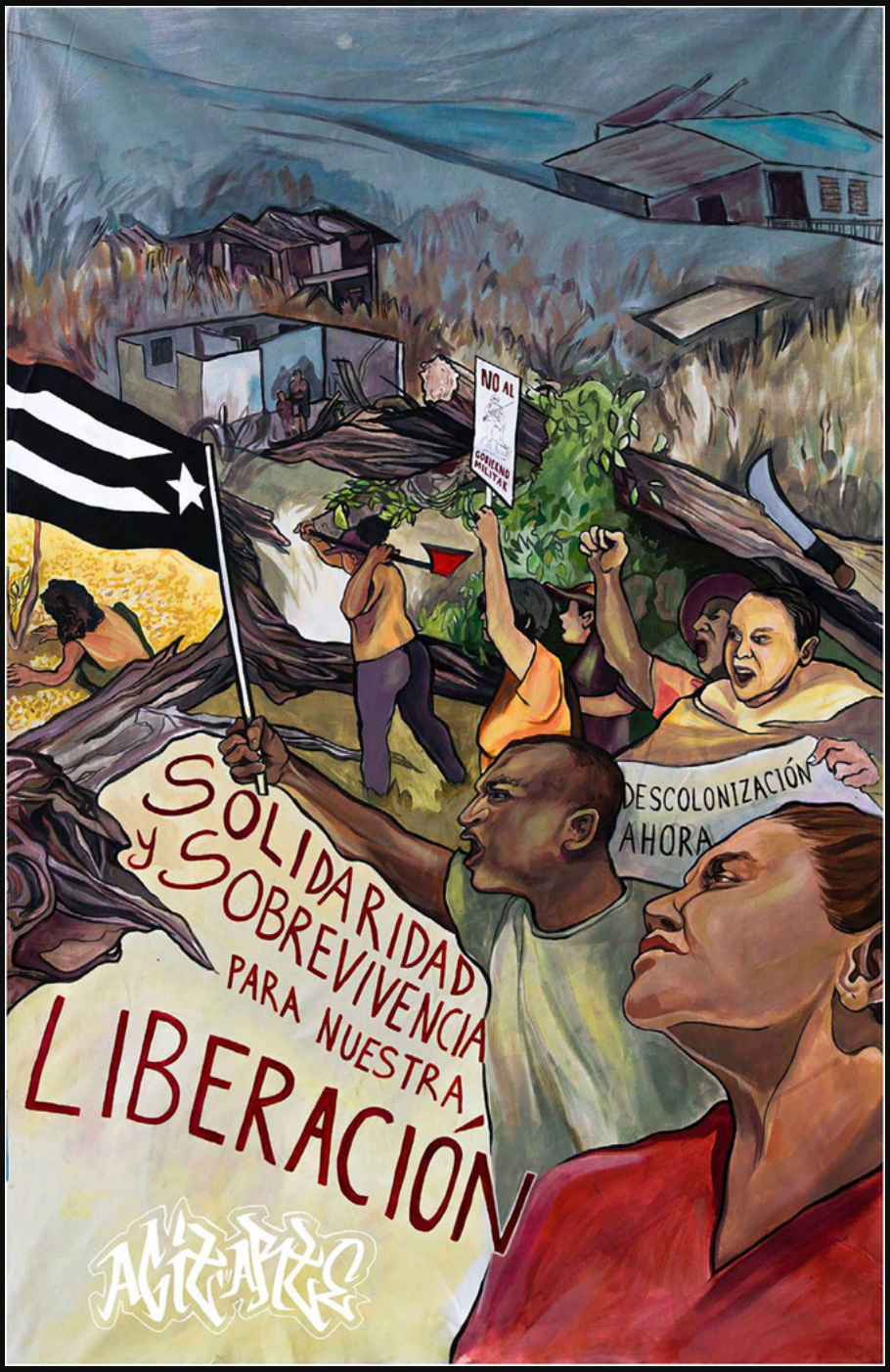
Jorge's recollection of that day is not an altogether fond one:

> That day, I say we really messed up in the street. It was horrible, our people were terrible performing, it was raining. [One member] took off his mask, ran away. Because that day there was heavy confrontation [with police]. We had to all stay together, because we didn't know what was going to happen. I didn't know anyone . . . We were all looking out, just to not get beat up. We were wearing masks… I had never done street theater with masks. I had done very few things in the street, and never at protests.

All the same, there was a collective decision to turn the experience into a long-term project: "As horrible as that day was, the energy of performing in the streets was such that we said, 'Let's get a project going.'"

Such a project would need its own name, which came to Jorge almost immediately. On September 23, 2005, Filiberto Ojeda Ríos, leader of the clandestine pro-independence organization known as the Macheteros, had been gunned down by the FBI. Years earlier, Juan Carlos Ortega, a Colombian poet and activist who had helped found Jorge's first political theater group back in Massachusetts, had written a poem to Puerto Rico's liberation struggle, in which the Macheteros were referenced and papier-mâché was deployed as a central metaphor: "con papel y con machete armaremos el futuro." Papel Machete thus




NO AL
GOBIERNO
MILITAR
DESCOLONIZACIÓN
AHORA
SOLIDARIDAD
Y SOBREVIVENCIA
PARA NUESTRA
LIBERACIÓN

seemed an obvious choice as a moniker for the emerging anti-colonial, anti-capitalist agit-prop street theater group.

Over the next decade, Papel Machete developed its repertoire as the crisis unfolded. One of the group's most widely seen and best-remembered acts was the *Ninguno Pa' Gobernador* campaign during the 2008 elections.

> It's a project that begins as a joke between [another Papel Machete member] and I. It was like: "Ninguno [none of the candidates] this, that"...it began verbally: "Ninguno comes from the people" [...] We were even on [comedian Antonio Sánchez] El Gangster's show, you know, they insisted, they called us. Remember, Ninguno is a joke, so it has the perfect combination of what reaches Boricua popular culture...of course, there's a [political] basis for all this: when we did it, half the country was already not voting. It's not a question of just vacilón [...] We had masks, flags, signs, we had everything, folks wearing t-shirts. We appropriated that electoral aesthetic too, to bring the message.

Despite its spontaneous origin, Jorge recalls Ninguno as one of Papel Machete's few initiatives that was carefully planned (rather than "organically" responding to events in the heat of the moment). Humorous wordplay in the idiosyncratic style of popular Puerto Rican vacilón quickly became a detailed campaign for electoral abstention—and, Jorge adds, "an invitation to organize in the streets and communities as the only real option for the working class"—echoing what at the time was in fact a growing sense of a lack of true alternatives.

Other, less known Papel Machete acts deployed a variety of theater and street theater genres and techniques, including street performances, puppet and shadow puppet theater, toy theater, cantastorias ("story singer" in Italian; a genre in which a narrator tells or sings a story while gesturing to a series of images), crankys (or crankies; a technique that involves a roll of paper with painted images that tell a story, that is gradually "cranked" or pulled into view), and scrolls (similar to the cranky, without the crank, and involving audience participation). Throughout the years, these have been performed in plazas and other urban public spaces, at demonstrations, or for communities facing displacement, police violence, and environmental injustice.

The group has also developed numerous indoor theater pieces presented within a variety of cultural spaces both in Puerto Rico and abroad. On the importance of such spaces as a platform for, Javier notes how the annual *Titeretada*, an independent puppet festival "pushes us to create these short pieces, and to continue exploring more media, more aesthetics, because it positions us right next to puppeteers and companies like MaskHunt and Y No Había Luz. Obviously, we had to be there [...] It's a good cultural space, and in some way we're helping to radicalize it. We've had a very good reception amongst that public, and we started noticing how some of the other companies' performances went more progressive, started saying something."

Papel Machete has been on the organizing committee of the Titeretada since its inception in 2008.

Without a doubt, however, it is the giant puppets which have left Papel Machete (and AgitArte's) most visible and lasting mark on Puerto Rico's political and cultural landscape, starting with El Gigante Proletario on the group's one-year anniversary on

May 1, 2007. The following year, 2008, saw the birth of La Maestra Combativa in support of a week-and-a-half long teachers' strike demanding improved conditions and opposing the introduction of charter schools, which paralyzed most of the colony's public schools. Fifteen years later, la Maestra can still be seen at mobilizations against school closures, further cuts to teachers' pensions, and privatization and austerity policies in general.

During the 2010-2011 UPR student strike, Papel Machete members (some of whom were also students) assisted strikers in the construction of El Estudiante Militante, which became the internationally recognized symbol of that struggle. Encompassing these two major processes—the teachers' and UPR student strikes—from 2008 until 2014 the giant puppets were usually accompanied by Papel Machete's marching band, which often also participated in large marches on its own, identifiable not just by its musical instruments and distinctive black-and-red "uniforms," but also by large, colorful signs and placards.

Around 2014, the Puerto Rican radical Left entered a period of profound introspection. Infighting, shifting visions and priorities, and the untimely deaths of historical leaders led to the weakening, disappearance, or transformation of the political cadre organizations that formed Agitarte/ Papel Machete's "ecosystem." Repeated disappointments after two decades of neoliberal offensive made it clear that the wider movements of the older generation would not recover their lost militancy. After repeated tuition hikes and other institutional changes, students, who had been the backbone of the radical Left during this period, no longer had enough time to dedicate to activist work, or were graduating into, and becoming parents in, an extremely hostile labor environment. Like hundreds of thousands of Puerto Ricans during this period, many were forced to migrate, as hundreds of thousands had decades before.

In Papel Machete's case—perhaps more so than for other groups, given the labor- and material-intensive costs of the work—survival hinged on the capacity to financially sustain a tight core of full-time artist-activists with a wide range of occasional collaborators, rather than the formal membership of about fifteen it had at its peak. More priority began to be given to AgitArte (already incorporated as a non-profit) as the fiscal sponsor and "broad tent" for a series of projects, of which Papel Machete is just one. The Casa Taller—then at a different location (the structure that houses it today was purchased in 2020)—became a more formal headquarters and working/living space for a few core members and visiting collaborators. Ironically, while according to Javier, "Papel Machete is what [kept] AgitArte alive for so many years," Jorge now notes that "surely Papel Machete would have disappeared if it wasn't for AgitArte."

EXERCISING INDEPENDENCE

In 2016, after Puerto Rico's governor declared the colony's $74 billion public debt "unpayable," the U.S. Congress passed the Puerto Rico Oversight, Management, and Economic Stability Act (PROMESA), which among other things created an unelected, unaccountable 7-member Fiscal Oversight and Management Board (known locally as la Junta) named by the U.S. President, and with the power to review and overturn all local financial legislation, propose "adjustment plans," and initiate a local bankruptcy process. Opposition to PPROMESA and la Junta took various forms, most visibly in the eventual emergence

of Jornada: Se Acabaron las Promesas ("Promises Are Over" Campaign; referred to simply as "Jornada"), a group that combines confrontational tactics with highly visible, intentional performativity, in many ways inspired by Papel Machete. The two groups have collaborated closely from the start and continue to do so.

A year later, on September 20, 2017, Hurricane María devastated the colony, drastically compounding the uneven structural vulnerabilities and eroded state capacities produced by two decades of deindustrialization, aggressive neoliberalization, and fiscal crisis, now augmented by la Junta's draconian prescriptions. The Casa Taller instantly became a kind of soup kitchen and supply hub for the immediate AgitArte/Papel Machete community, their families, and neighbors. As Javier, who lives nearby, recounts:

> I was able to deal with [what was going on] mentally, because I would wake up, maybe have a quick breakfast, and head over [to the Casa Taller], in order to not just sit there at home all messed up [with nothing to do].

Repeated disappointments after two decades of neoliberal offensive made it clear that the wider movements of the older generation would not recover their lost militancy. After repeated tuition hikes and other institutional changes, students, who had been the backbone of the radical Left during this period, no longer had enough time to dedicate to activist work, or were graduating into, and becoming parents in, an extremely hostile labor environment.

Soon, a conversation with fellow Left activist Giovanni Roberto, who a few years later had started a mutual aid non-profit initiative on UPR campuses to feed hungry students, led to AgitArte taking on a much bigger role.

Casually dropping by the Casa Taller for a rest stop on a particularly chaotic day two weeks after the storm, Roberto shared the work his organization was doing in the town center of Caguas, setting up what was to be the first Centro de Apoyo Mutuo (CAM; "Mutual Aid Center"). As Su recalls, "He said to us, 'It would be great if Papel Machete could stand in the lines and do some theater or something to communicate what's going on [to the people lining up for food and other necessities at the CAM]."

> So we had a meeting right then and there, and began to develop material, and put out a cantastoria called Solidaridad y sobrevivencia para nuestra liberación, which consists of two panels in which we explain what was happening in the country, the withholding of aid, the interminable lines everywhere, the uncounted deaths, and also how people were lifting up their communities and surviving through self-management, solidarity, and mutual aid. And denouncing how the state had failed, how it wasn't just a crisis because of the catastrophe, but also because the system doesn't work.

The human-made catastrophe itself thus created a "political opportunity" not just in the form of what Su calls a sense of "clarity" amongst the general population, but also in the very physical spaces where activists stepped in to fill the vacuum left by the state's inability or unwillingness to provide basic services.

Beyond the accustomed political agitation through Papel Machete, ongoing conversations with Roberto and other activists from other organizations led to the creation of more CAMs throughout the main island of Puerto Rico, and eventually a (relatively short-lived) Mutual Aid Network. Su narrates a striking summary of the multiple types of activity and emotional stamina this entailed:

> Right after María, our space, the Casa Taller, became a central aid collection and distribution hub. Many people began to send things from the U.S. and…Anyway, the CAMs began to take shape in many parts of the [main] island, many comrades in their own communities, and we helped facilitate through the aid that was arriving. Food for the CAMs that were slated to become soup kitchens, or through the purchase of equipment, materials…We did a lot in that sense […] For me, it was exhausting, but you know what? At the time, there wasn't even time to process what was happening because we were doing stuff all the time…Organizing, coordinating, finding funds to support the comrades who were running the CAMs, finding money so those folks could continue doing things, because there was no money coming in, people were unemployed. The search for funds… to try and provide work for artists to generate art denouncing what was going on.

Together with Jornada, AgitArte helped run two San Juan area CAMs (in addition to the Casa Taller itself, which continued to provide three meals a day for 15-20 people for six months), and Su's contacts in Villa Sin Miedo—a historically combative land rescue community in Canóvanas—led to setting up a CAM there as well.

María also led to a series of new non-theatrical visual arts projects. One was the creation of Datos y dibujos, a "rapid

response network" of graphics for online distribution, illustrating the extent of the human toll caused by the neoliberal colonial state's failed response. This initiative lasted for the year or two following the hurricane and was reactivated during the COVID-19 pandemic. Another was the production of physical posters using printing techniques in the traditional Puerto Rican political poster-making style, supporting the CAMs or denouncing various ongoing injustices. The originals are displayed in the Casa Taller's library, and some—like Javier's *Aquí servimos solidaridad*—have been featured alongside historical posters in public exhibitions at the UPR's Museum of Anthropology and Art and other venues.

Reflecting on the group's commitment to "total decolonization," Jorge referred me to an article he had written on the mutual aid efforts that followed Hurricane María. Despite his protestations to the contrary, the brief but theoretically sophisticated paragraph where these ideas are laid out is worth reproducing in its entirety:

> Nonetheless the exercises of self-governance, or as we called them ejercicios de independencia, experienced in the CAMs and when people came together to oust an abusive colonial governor, are great examples of a transformation that's possible when the material conditions and the will of the people come together. The fissures created after catastrophes in

> the management of emergencies by the state can create conditions for breaks in the hegemony of our colonial state and permit for new structures of governance and power. These are much needed exercises of autonomous action and organizing, which inform practices and ideas of future alternatives to the organization of the state and society.

Jorge and AgitArte are not alone among contemporary activists making this kind of link in the context of Puerto Rico's recent history, which synthesizes centuries of revolutionary theory and practice with similarly long-standing traditions of thinking about the politics of disaster. What stands out here is the serious attention to not just the "breaks in the hegemony of our colonial state," but also to potentialities for creating "new structures of governance and power" and "future alternatives to the organization of the state and society.

DIASPORIC ARTS

AgitArte also continues to collaborate with numerous individuals and groups beyond Puerto Rico's geographical limits. For instance, the group maintains close relationships with individual artist-activists and popular education acts through mutual contact with the Vermont-based Bread and Puppet Theater. Over the years, these have been part of AgitArte's extended network, staying in residence at the Casa Taller or contributing "rapid response" projects.

In 2014, Papel Machete collaborated with the Brooklyn-based community organization El Puente to produce La Madre Tierra, an 18-foot high puppet that was a centerpiece of the 300,000-strong People's Climate March in New York on September 21, during the U.N. Climate Summit. AgitArte's transnational support network also led to the collective's co-editing of the book *When We Fight, We Win!* (2016) a collection of richly illustrated stories of intersectional resistance from around the globe. The book's release was followed by a still ongoing podcast which features contributions from Jorge and fellow AgitArte founder and board member Deymirie Hernández.

AgitArte's latest transnational collaboration is the multimedia onstage performance *On the Eve of Abolition*, whose storyline is "set in the year 2047 in the transnational liberated lands of what used to be known as the U.S. and Mexico, after a movement of abolitionists have created the conditions to end the prison-industrial complex." Funded by various grants and co-commissioned by prestigious Latinx arts organizations around the U.S., the play was first shown in Dallas, Texas, in the fall of 2022.

ANT'S WORK

Despite the flurry of organizing activity that followed Hurricane María, the 2019 Puerto Rican Uprising caught Jorge, Javi, and Su by surprise, as it did most informed observers. Jorge was not in Puerto Rico when it began; Javier left on a long-planned vacation with his partner the day before Rosselló finally announced his resignation, not without first participating with Papel Machete at the larger marches, while also attending the more combative demonstrations taking place at the governor's mansion each night, because in his words "I can't miss out on this!"

Su's narrative of her experiences and impressions vividly illustrate the affective charge of that process:

> I was impressed. Especially… we, since we have so many years going to marches and protests… there are certain ways that

> we're used to: formations, blocs… and suddenly you see this wave of people, so that we could barely hold our contingent, our formation. Which to us is important, because it's part of how the march looks… The thing is I see this groundswell of people, boom, boom, passing on all sides… motorcycles, horses… I really had never seen, lived, anything like it. I think the nights were also… it was a lot of intensity, a lot of adrenaline, a lot of emotion. And joy, also . . . To stop and look around, and say "Holy shit, this is happening! […] What I remember is that… and the huge solidarity between everyone participating. How folks took care of one another, the support amongst the groups… and to recognize ourselves within that reality as well. It's something that I take with me.

"We worked a lot, too," she notes, "generating visual material for the streets again" and participating in various "politico-cultural" performances during demonstrations.

The intensity subsided as soon as the governor announced his resignation, and for reasons that are beyond the scope of this essay, continued mobilization around a wide range of issues has not (yet) cohered into a sustained challenge to the colony's political and economic status quo. Nonetheless, as Su eloquently puts it,

> [E]ven though things took the direction they did, I think the work we did at that moment [following Hurricane María] opened the way towards everything that came after, up to the summer of 2019. You know, to take down a governor… I told myself, "This doesn't come out of nowhere!" [*"sacar a un gobernador… Yo me dije, ¡Esto no sale de la nada!"*] All of this is [the product of] work that has been generated for many years, with our crews and our communities, and all of the work that was done after María… I understand it as a process that, even if it didn't reach the place I imagined, that I wanted it to reach, did open up a world of possibilities, of having other systems of governance.

Whatever the emergent qualities expressed by the Uprising, it is also a product of the patient, molecular politico-affective work of AgitArte and other groups—what Javi calls "trabajo de hormiga" ("ants' work").

Jorge also insists on the importance of this work over the years. Looking back on my transcripts, I can't help conclude that this notion of generative work is what actually defines his "proyecto de crisis:" "The crisis," he says, just a few lines after an extended assessment of historical defeat, "truly gives you perspective to say: 'The work is here. Let's do it!'"

AU-THOR BIOS

CLARA MARIA APOSTOLATOS

Clara Maria Apostolatos is an M.A. student at the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University. Her research interests include modern and contemporary art of Latin America, Institutional Critique, and the politics of memory. She co-curated the exhibition "Kenneth Kemble and Silvia Torras: The Formative Years, 1956-63" and held positions at the Guggenheim Museum, the Whitney Museum of American Art, the Center for Italian Modern Art, and the Peggy Guggenheim Collection.

JULIANNE CHANDLER

Julianne Chandler is a journalist, editor, and educator based between Cochabamba, Bolivia and Brooklyn, New York. She is the Web Editor at NACLA and a graduate of NYU's joint masters program in Global Journalism and Latin American & Caribbean Studies. Her research and reporting interests include gender and feminist studies and extractivism in Latin America. You can find her work at juliannechandler.com.

JORGE CRUZ

Jorge Cruz is a current PhD student in Chicano/a Studies at UCLA and received his master's degree in Latin American Studies from Cal State LA. His research explores queer representations in Latinx art.

MARCOS ECHEVERRÍA ORTIZ

Marcos Echeverría Ortiz is an award-winning interdisciplinary journalist, photographer, and documentary maker practicing transmedia storytelling. His work uses hybrid media to explore the immigrant experience in New York City through stories connected to memory, archives, underground music, and human rights. His work has been exhibited and installed in Spain, Germany, Puerto Rico, Panamá, Argentina, Colombia, Ecuador, and the US. He has recently covered social justice movements and worked with organizations such as NYCC, Make The Road New York, and Lincoln Center. His writings have been published in Radio COCOA, Noisey VICE, among others. His pictures have also appeared in Business Insider and The New York Times. Marcos was a fellow of the Provost Scholarship at The New School, where he graduated with honors from the MA program in Media Studies, and a Fellow of the Culture and Narrative Fellowship at the Opportunity Agenda.

WILFRED GUERRON

Wilfred Guerron is a graduate of the Harvard University Graduate School of Design, holding a Masters with Distinction in Design Studies, in the field of History and Philosophy of Design and Media. His research focuses on the ways community-based artistic practices shape the preservation and promotion of local identity. Currently, he works as a college coach for Eastside College Preparatory School, mentoring and advising first-generation college students at varying stages of their academic journey. He holds a Bachelor of Arts from

Williams College, where he majored in Art History. Wilfred was born and raised in the Lower East Side, New York. He currently lives in Oakland, California.

LAURA G. GUTIÉRREZ

Laura G. Gutiérrez is a researcher and writer of Latinx and Mexican performance and visual culture. She is an Associate Professor in the Department of Mexican American and Latina/o Studies at the University of Texas at Austin and is the author of *Performing Mexicanidad: Vendidas y Cabareteras on the Transnational Stage* (U Texas P, 2010). She has also published essays and book chapters on topics such as Latinx performance, border art, Mexican video art, and Mexican political cabaret. During the fall of 2022 she was a Getty Scholar at the Getty Research Institute in Los Angeles and is currently a UT Provost's Authors Fellow (2022-23). These two fellowships have allowed her time away from the classroom to work on her monograph tentatively entitled *Binding Intimacies in Contemporary Queer Latinx Performance and Visual Art*, which includes an analysis of rafa esparza's work as well as that of other contemporary Latinx artists.

TANYA KATERÍ HERNÁNDEZ

Tanya Katerí Hernández is an internationally recognized comparative race law expert and a professor of law at Fordham University School of Law, where she teaches anti-discrimination law, comparative employment discrimination, and critical race theory. A Fulbright scholar, Princeton and Rutgers fellow, and former scholar in residence at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, she specializes in comparative race relations and anti-discrimination law. Hernández is the author of multiple books, including *Multiracials and Civil Rights: Mixed-Race Stories of Discrimination*.

JOSÉ A. LAGUARTA RAMÍREZ

José A. Laguarta Ramírez is a Research Associate at the Center for Puerto Rican Studies (CENTRO) at Hunter College, City University of New York (CUNY). He has taught throughout the CUNY system and at the University of Puerto Rico, and is currently developing a book project on radical social movements, memory, and political affect in Puerto Rico from 1996 to the present.

JANEL MARTINEZ

Janel Martinez is a writer and the founder of award-winning blog, Ain't I Latina?, an online destination celebrating Afro-Latinx womanhood. The Bronx, NY native is a frequent public speaker discussing media, culture and identity at conferences and events for Bloomberg, NBCU, New York University, SXSW, Harvard University and more. She's appeared as a featured guest on national shows and outlets, such as MSNBC's The Culture Is: Latina, BuzzFeed, ESSENCE, NPR and Sirius XM, and her work has appeared in Adweek, Univision Communications, Oprah Daily, Refinery29, Remezcla and The New York Times, among others.

The Honduran-American has been nominated for the 20th Annual Rosoff Award in the 20-Something Category and won the Afro-Latino Festival of New York's Digital Empowerment Award and, in 2018, was recognized at City Hall by the New York City Council, the Black, Latino and Asian Caucus and the Bronx Delegation to the NYC Council for her contributions as a woman of Garifuna descent.

Her work is featured in the YA anthology, *Wild Tongues Can't Be Tamed*, published by Flatiron Books.

NEYDA MARTINEZ

Neyda Martinez is a producer, strategist, writer, and a long-time cultural worker who explores the role of art in public life while centering social justice and cultural equity. Selected in 2023 as a Sundance Woman to Watch x Adobe Fellow, and a Faculty Fellow for the Mellon Initiative for Inclusive Faculty Excellence, Neyda's current documentaries in production include BARTOLO and A CHASM IN CHINATOWN. Past documentary credits include LUCKY (2014); and DECADE OF FIRE, PBS' Independent Lens 2020 Audience Award winner. For over a decade she was a communications strategist for AMDOC/American Documentary's POV and AMERICA REFRAMED series, managing publicity, marketing, and branding efforts with local, regional and national partners. She has worked for the Chicago International Art Expo, El Museo del Barrio, The Public Theater, and consulted on initiatives for Hachette Book Group USA, WNYC, NYC Mayor's Office of Adult Education, Creative Justice Initiative, Futuro Media Group's and WNYC's podcast, "La Brega," and many others.

Neyda serves on the editorial board of NYU's Latinx Project "IntervenXions" and on the nonprofit boards of Pepatián, UPROSE and Women Make Movies. Presently, she is an Associate Professor in the School of Media Studies, Director of the Media Management Graduate Program and Co-Director of the Impact Entrepreneurship Initiative at The New School. Recent fellowships include the Sundance Institute Documentary Lab (2022-23) and the New School for Social Research Heilbroner Capitalism Fellow (2022-23). Originally from Chicago's West Side, she earned a Masters in Public Administration from Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs.

SEBASTIÁN MELTZ-COLLAZO

Sebastián Meltz-Collazo is a writer, visual artist, and musician working towards new experiences through the intersection of narratives. Connecting personal with collective histories, he explores iterations of visual culture and representation with the intention of raising questions around identity and its various manifestations. He is a graduate of Image Text Ithaca and is based in New York & Puerto Rico.

ELIZABETH MIRABAL

Elizabeth Mirabal is an award-winning writer from Havana, Cuba. She is currently a doctoral student in the Department of Spanish, Italian, and Portuguese at the University of Virginia.

Her writing, which encompasses fiction and non-fiction, has been dedicated to rescuing exiled Cuban writers who have been banished from the literary and cultural history of their country. She co-authored two books about Guillermo Cabrera Infante: *Sobre los pasos del cronista*, which won the 2009 UNEAC Essay Award and Cuban Literary Criticism Award, and *Buscando a Caín* (2012). She also co-authored *Hablar de Guillermo Rosales* (2013); *Tiempo de escuchar* (2011); and *Chakras: Historias de la Cuba dispersa* (2014). Mirabal is the author of two novels: *La isla de las mujeres tristes* (2014), which won the Ibero-American Verbum Award, and *La belleza de la inutilidad* (2020). Her most recent book is *Herbarium* (2021). For a complete list of her publications, see www.elizabethmirabal.com/bio.html

NIKKI MYERS

Nikki Myers is a scholar focusing on visual culture, Latina bodies and the media. She graduated from NYU Gallatin in 2023 with a B.A. in Latin American Women and Visual Culture. She is now pursuing an M.A. in History of Design and Curatorial Studies at Parsons, which she will use to further study Latina artists whose work focuses on feminist and queer aesthetics in the digital age.

ORLANDO OCHOA

Orlando Ochoa (they/them) is a queer, non-binary, Mexican poet and writer from the Rio Grande Valley of South Texas. They are a first-generation college student and the eldest child of three. Orlando received their bachelor's degree in African & African Diaspora Studies and Women's & Gender Studies from the University of Texas at Austin and is a first-year Ph.D. student in the Department of American Studies. Orlando's research focuses on desert poetics, border formations, migrancy, queer desire and intimacy.

NÉSTOR DAVID PASTOR

Néstor David Pastor is a writer and editor, born and raised in Queens, NY. He is the founding editor of *Intervenxions* and *Huellas*, a bilingual magazine of nonfiction writing by emerging Latinx and Latin American writers. His writing has appeared in The Nation, Hyperallergic, OkayAfrica, REMEZCLA, Latino USA, Newtown Literary, and the Los Angeles Review of Books, among other publications. He has edited several collections, including *Latinx Politics: Resistance, Disruption, and Power* (2020), *Intervenxions Vol. 1* (2022, co-edited with Alex Santana), and *Huellas Vol. 3 ¡Queens is the Future!* (2023). His previous work includes the Center for Puerto Rican Studies at Hunter College, Radio Ambulante, the Loisaida Center Inc., and the North American Congress on Latin America (NACLA).

ALEX SANTANA

Alex Santana is a writer and curator with an interest in conceptual art, political intervention, and public participation. Currently based in New York but originally from Newark, NJ, she has held positions at the Smithsonian American Art Museum, the Joan Mitchell Center, Mana Contemporary, and Alexander Gray Associates. Her interviews and essays have been

published by Hyperallergic, CUE Art Foundation, Terremoto Magazine, The Brooklyn Rail, Precog Magazine, Artsy, and The Latinx Project.

KALE SERRATO DOYEN

Kale Serrato Doyen (she/her) is currently a Ph.D. student of the History of Art and Architecture at the University of Pittsburgh. She received a B.A. in Art History from the University of Illinois at Chicago in Spring 2020. Kale studies modern and contemporary art history of the United States with a focus on Black and Latinx artists and their representations of landscape. She has completed curatorial internships at the National Museum of Mexican Art, Smithsonian National Portrait Gallery, and was a 2018-20 Mellon Undergraduate Curatorial Fellow at the Art Institute of Chicago. She was also a Museum Technician at the Bay County Historical Society in Bay City, Michigan from 2015-2017.

JESSY V. CASTILLO OF RARA MATTER, DESIGNER

Jessy V. Castillo is a gender-fluid UX, Visual, and Print designer building un otro modo de ser through arts, culture, and change at Rara Matter. Their work balances simplicity with experimentation and is climate-focused, trauma and accessibility informed, and rooted in equity for all. Jessy can be found online at @practicayproceso or raramatter.info and sitting somewhere in the Los Angeles/Tongva Land sunshine having coffee.

END NOTES

‘Cruising Utopia’ with rafa esparza’s Corpo RanfLA: Terra Cruiser (2022)

1. I would like to thank Fabian Guerrero for his permission to use the photographs in this essay.
2. For more on Gabriela Ruiz see: https://www.latimes.com/lifestyle/story/2021-07-08/gabriela-ruiz-is-the-buzz-of-the-l-a-art-world-and-the-vibe-of-the-week.
3. For more on Cauleen Smith, visit her website: https://www.cauleensmith.com.
4. For more information on the creative process of the ticket and Víctor Barragán’s relationship with rafa esparza, see this reflection by Barragán: https://www.latimes.com/lifestyle/image/story/2022-11-29/victor-barragan-creates-ticket-for-rafa-esparza-art-basel-miami.
5. For a peek at Víctor Barragán’s artistic practice, focusing on fashion, see this short video from *Apartmento*: https://www.apartamentomagazine.com/stories/victor-barragan/.
6. esparza wrote about the process of transforming himself into a cyborg, read it here: https://www.latimes.com/lifestyle/image/story/2022-11-29/rafa-esparza-becomes-a-lowrider-cyborg-for-art-basel-miami
7. esparza penned a piece on the project from his perspective, see here: https://www.latimes.com/lifestyle/image/story/2022-11-29/rafa-esparza-becomes-a-lowrider-cyborg-for-art-basel-miami
8. On the meaningful collaboration between Canseco and esparza, read Canseco’s own words here: https://www.latimes.com/lifestyle/image/story/2022-11-29/karla-ekatherine-canseco-creates-work-with-rafa-esparza-art-basel-miami
9. A note on pronoun use: I will use esparza’s preferred pronouns, he/him/his when referring to him, but will use they/them—my call and am responsible

for it—when referring to the lowrider cyborg as I read *Corpo RanfLA* as gender fluid. The whole performance and piece are not only very brown, but very queer.

10. In English, For the Land / For the People.

11. In my current book-length manuscript, *Binding Intimacies in Queer Latinx Performance and Visual Art*, among other things, I examine this idea of the racialized laboring body in esparza's artistic work, particularly as it relates to his adobe art practice.

12. From rafa esparza's Instagram's post on December 3, 2022, https://www.instagram.com/p/CluXdFbPfpj/ accessed December 8, 2022.

13. A brief essay on Fabian Guerrero's photography was published on *Intervenxions*, find it here: https://www.latinxproject.nyu.edu/intervenxions/traversing-intimate-spaces-the-photography-of-fabian-guerrero.

14. Guadalupe Rosales' *Veteranas and Rucas* can be found here: https://www.veteranasandrucas.com and on Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/veteranas_and_rucas/.

15. There are a total of six essays, each one written by either esparza or five collaborators with images taken by either Star Montana or Estevan Oriol. There are some reprints of some photographs taken by Fabian Guerrero. https://www.latimes.com/projects/ArtBaselMiami/ Accessed January 3, 2023. The December 2022 print edition of *Image* features one of these photos taken by Oriol in Elysian Park.

16. Estevan Oriol's website: https://www.estevanoriol.com.

17. Bárbara Sánchez-Kane's website can be found here: https://sanchez-kane.com.

18. rafa esparza, "How rafa esparza transformed himself into a lowrider cyborg for Art Basel Miami," https://www.latimes.com/lifestyle/image/story/2022-11-29/rafa-esparza-becomes-a-lowrider-cyborg-for-art-basel-miami.

19. Fabian Guerrero's essay and reproduction of images for the first instantiation of *Corpo Ranfla* can be found here: https://www.latimes.com/lifestyle/image/story/2022-11-29/fabian-guerrero-on-rafa-esparza-as-mentor-art-basel-miami.

20. In "The paint must hit from all angles on the lowrider cyborg. Enter Mario Ayala" Mario Ayala recounts how it was to airbrush esparza in 2018 and convert him into a human version of the infamous Gypsy Rose lowrider. https://www.latimes.com/lifestyle/image/story/2022-11-29/mario-ayala-rafa-esparza-on-the-art-of-cars-art-basel-miami. Accessed December 27, 2022.

21. This performance was part of multidisciplinary variety theatrical spectacle Variedades curated by Marcus Kuiland-Nazario and presented as part of Pacific Standard Time Festival: Live Art LA/LA on January 18, 2018.

22. rafa esparza, "How rafa esparza transformed himself into a lowrider cyborg for Art Basel Miami," https://www.latimes.com/lifestyle/image/story/2022-11-29/rafa-esparza-becomes-a-lowrider-cyborg-for-art-basel-miami.

23. Sharpe, Christina. "Beauty is a Method." https://www.e-flux.com/

journal/105/303916/beauty-is-a-method/ (accessed January 3, 2023).

24. From a brief conversation with Canseco. Mexico City, January 11, 2023.

25. Canseco, Karla Ekatherine, "The cyborg is an extension of self. What myths has this creature inherited from rafa?" https://www.latimes.com/lifestyle/image/story/2022-11-29/karla-ekatherine-canseco-creates-work-with-rafa-esparza-art-basel-miami. Accessed January 10, 2023.

Animating Memory: Affective Touch & Corporeality in the Work of Camilo Godoy and Carlos Martiel

1. Carlos Martiel. "Seeing Otherwise: Latinx Counter-memory and Counter-archives," artist panel moderated by Clara Apostolatos, Madison Conliffe, and Jorge Sánchez, May 3, 2022.

2. *Ibid*. Camilo Godoy

3. Counter-archives embrace alternative sources, reports and narratives to enact interventions to official memory. Counter-archival practices may divulge alternate or complementary accounts of history as a way of resisting hegemonic memory politics.

4. Camilo Godoy, "Seeing Otherwise: Latinx Counter-memory and Counter-archives," artist panel on May 3, 2022.

5. Such as settler and colonial accounts of witchcraft and lack of civility in Cuban indigenous traditions of dance as ritual.

6. Thorsen, Sofie. "Counter-Archiving: Combating Data Colonialism," Medium (Scenario, November 16, 2020). https://medium.com/copenhagen-institute-for-futures-studies/counter-archiving-combating-data-colonialism-be17ffead4.

7. This article is a segment of a group research paper written by Madison Conliffe, Jorge Sánchez and Clara Maria Apostolatos for the course "Caribbean Art and Society at the Crossroads of the World" taught by Edward J. Sullivan, *Helen Gould Shepard Professor in the History of Art*; the Institute of Fine Arts and College of Arts and Sciences, New York University, in the spring 2022 semester. I am grateful to Jorge for introducing us to these talented artists, and I extend my thanks to both Jorge and Madison for organizing with me the artist panel "Seeing Otherwise," which served as the foundation for our collaborative research and this article. I would like to thank Camilo Godoy and Carlos Martiel for kindly participating in our panel and sharing invaluable insights on their creative process. I would also like to express my appreciation to Juliana Juarbe and Hunter Garrison for their careful reading and comments.

Love Letter to Ana Mendieta

1. Marcia Tucker (1987) Preface and Acknowledgements, *Ana Mendieta: A Retrospective*, The New Museum of Contemporary Art.

2. Ana Mendieta (1977) Artist Statement, Corroboree Gallery of New Concepts (The University of Iowa, IL).

3. Gilbert Coker (1980) Ana Mendieta at A.I.R., *Art in America*, April: 133–4.

4. José Esteban Muñoz (2011) *Vitalism's after-burn: The sense of Ana Mendieta*, Women & Performance: a journal of feminist theory, 21:2, 191-198.

5. A.I.R. Gallery organized an exhibition

in 2018 that revisited *Dialectics of Isolation: An Exhibition of Third World Women Artists of the United States*, originally curated by Ana Mendieta in 1980 at A.I.R. Gallery, where she was a member.

6. A 2016 exhibition titled *Energy Charge* organized by the ASU Art Museum grappled with some of these questions, also included in the exhibition catalog.

Estrangement, Restlessness, and Rupture: Pablo Delano and the Rethinking of Puerto Rico

1. Lola Rodríguez de Tió, *Mi libro de Cuba* (La Habana: Imprenta la Moderna, 1893).

2. See https://www.jmu.edu/dukehallgallery/exhibitions-21-22/pablo-delano.shtml.

3. Laura Katzman, ed., *The Museum of the Old Colony: An Art Installation by Pablo Delano* (Harrisonburg: Duke Hall Gallery of Fine Art/JMU in association with University of Virginia Press).https://www.upress.virginia.edu/title/5885/.

4. For example, as noted by other scholars, the racial dimension of the installation was emphasized in the JMU venue in Harrisonburg, given the troubling "Jim Crow" racial history of this southern city in the former Confederate state of Virginia. In the New York University venue, images related to the Puerto Rican diaspora were included. See essays in Katzman, ed., *The Museum of the Old Colony*, 9, 28, and 43.

5. In his latest exhibition, *cuestiones caribeñas/caribbean matters*, Delano employs assemblage in even more destabilizing ways. For example, in the piece "The crossroads/*La encrucijada*," the *Santería* necklaces or elekes are now at the base of the orisha known as Eleguá, who appears as a tutelary and floating figure in a photograph taken by a Mennonite missionary. It depicts an anonymous traveler who has stopped his American-made car in search of his way through a Caribbean labyrinth populated by palm trees and a sugar plantation in the distance. Delano acknowledges that Eleguá is understood as the "Lord of the Crossroads," but is also the trickster that this African deity incarnates. In his role as the curator of his own exhibition, Delano too acts as a kind of trickster who questions which road the traveler (and by extension, the viewer) should take.

6. Katzman, "Puerto Rico in the 'American Century': Reflections on Pablo Delano's *The Museum of the Old Colony*," in *The Museum of the Old Colony*, 29.

7. Yomaira C. Figueroa-Vásquez, *Decolonizing Diasporas: Radical Mappings of Afro-Atlantic Literature* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2020), xxviii-xx.

8. See: https://repeatingislands.com/2023/01/15/art-exhibition-pablo-delanos-cuestiones-caribenas-caribbean-matters.

Mujeres Subversivas: Bolivian and Diasporic Feminist Art & Activism

1. Throughout this essay, I will refer to the artists by their first names as a way to personalize (and de-academize) their stories and works of art.

2. Quotes from Malena's project proposal.

ENDNOTES

The Evolution of Queer Latinx Nightlife in Los Angeles

1. Spaces of Conflict, Sounds of Solidarity: Music, Race, and Spatial Entitlement in Los Angeles, 2013, UC Press, Gaye Theresa Johnson
2. Muñoz, José Esteban, *The Sense of Brown*. Duke University Press.
3. *A Vessel Among Vessels: For Laura Aguilar*, Memories of a dyke bar in East LA conjure and are conjured by the work of Laura Aguilar, Raquel Gutiérrez, THE NEW INQUIRY, 2018

Visualizing Chicanx Presence in the Rural Midwest

1. Blumenstein, Rebecca. "Coming Home to a Michigan County Where Life Has Shifted." *The New York Times*, 9 March 2020. https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/09/us/michigan-primary-election.html
2. The Saginaw Trail was a series of connected pathways that traversed from Detroit, through Saginaw, to Mackinac Island (the island between Michigan's peninsulas, believed by the Ojibwe to be the birthplace of the universe). Further reading on the Saginaw Trail: Pielack, Leslie. *The Saginaw Trail: From Native American Path to Woodward Avenue*. Arcadia Publishing, Inc., 2018, Chicago.
3. Rosales, Steven. "'This Street is Essentially Mexican': An Oral History of the Mexican American Community of Saginaw, Michigan, 1920-1980." *The Michigan Historical Review*, 40.2, 2014. Pp. 39.
4. Rosales, 43.
5. Rosales, 44.
6. Dissimilarity ratings are a sociology measure used to evaluate segregation across census tracts. 0 indicates full integration and 1 indicates full segregation, and the national average is .526. Saginaw has received a black-white dissimilarity index rating of .649. Find the dissimilarity ratings of places across the country by visiting https://s4.ad.brown.edu/Projects/Diversity/segregation2010/default.aspx.
7. Engel, Justin. "Could passenger trains return to Saginaw's Potter Street Station? With a congressman asking, an idea gains steam." MLive Media Group, 29 July 2021. https://www.mlive.com/news/saginaw-bay-city/2021/07/could-passenger-trains-return-to-saginaws-potter-street-station-with-a-congressman-asking-an-idea-gains-steam.html
8. Highsmith, Andrew. *Demolition Means Progress: Flint, Michigan, and the Fate of the American Metropolis*. The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2015. Pp. 101.
9. NBC News. "Cars Made in Mexico? Undrinkable Water in Flint? Trump Vows Turnaround." 6 November 2016. https://www.nbcnews.com/video/cars-made-in-mexico-undrinkable-water-in-flint-trump-vows-turnaround-802425923724
10. Like Saginaw, Traverse City's agricultural industry recruited and retained Latinx migrants during the early twentieth century. Rosales, 47.
11. Knake, Lindsay. "Sense of loss remains 1 year after Buena Vista school district closed." MLive Media Group, 19 May 2014. https://www.mlive.com/news/saginaw/2014/05/buena_vista_schools_one_year_l.html

12. Further reading on Buena Vista Township and Michigan's educational finance reform: Arsen, David et al. "Which Districts Get into Financial Trouble and Why: Michigan's Story." *Journal of Education Finance*, 42.2, 2016. Pp. 100–126.
13. Further reading on Vanessa Guerra: Serrato Doyen, Kayleigh. "A Socially-Distanced Afternoon with Democratic County Clerk Candidate, Representative Vanessa Guerra." *Mi Gente Magazine*, Saginaw, September 2020. https://www.migentemagazine.com/an-afternoon-with-vanessa-guerra.html?fbclid=IwAR2FVWTAGARadiEmor5cpTgevmKZ7QT8eo-4KejzDd3p9IHY9zfPi6uhkfE

The Latin Music Legacy of Ralph Pérez and Ansonia Records

1. Both a WWII registration card and a petition for citizenship form for his wife list Mr. Perez's date of birth as January 29, 1899. Other sources list the year 1900.
2. Though born in Spain, Madriguera's repertoire as a recording artist was dedicated largely to Latin American music.
3. Pérez is erroneously referred to as Ralph Gómez Pérez, though the year and place of his birth, as well as employer are correct.
4. A collection of Bing Crosby's recordings of Latin American songs was released by Decca Records as *El Bingo - A Collection Of Latin American Favorites*. The only apparent difference between Bing Crosby and El Bingo appears to be the sombrero he is wearing on the album cover.
5. Curiously enough, another independent record company called Ideal Records was formed in 1946 to address the lack of recordings by Mexican-American artists in Texas. For more, see Francisco Orozco's dissertation, "Chololoche Grooves: Crossroads and Mestizaje in Chicano Soul of San Antonio."

From Ebony and Jet to Vibe, Black Latina Visual Media Representations Provides a Blueprint for Latinx Media

1. Zoe Saldaña is often included in discourse around Afro-Latino/a/x/e identity. Though she has identified as Black, as evidenced in an *Allure* interview that is no longer online, but referenced in the *Essence* article titled "Zoe Saldana Talks Dealing With Racism Amid Nina Simone Biopic Backlash," she has also distanced herself from these terms or identifying as Black.
2. The *Latina* cover story "Michaela Jaé: Storyteller & Protector" was written by Jasmin Hernandez, Black Latinx founder and editor in chief of Gallery Gurls.
3. Negro Digest returned as *Black World*, which was published until 1976.
4. Brenna Greer, "Magazine Portrayals of African Americans," C-SPAN video, 10:28, February 10, 2020, https://www.c-span.org/video/?469053-1/magazine-portrayals-african-americans
5. In an article published on *La Galería Magazine* titled, "The Story of Lourdes Guerrero, One of the First Black Women with a Recurring Role on National TV," it features an image of the December 1958 *Ebony* article, "Billboard Girl." It notes, "The information in this article was inaccurate, it was in fact Amanda Randolph who was the first African-American to appear as a regular on a national television show." https://

lagaleriamag.com/lourdesguerrerootis/

6. Lola Falana was one of the most famous showgirls in the United States in the 1970s. Falana, who is of Cuban descent, appeared on the cover of *Ebony* at least twice and *Jet* roughly seven times.

7. *Essence* is under Essence Communications Inc. (ECI), which was founded in 1968 by Edward Lewis, Clarence O. Smith, Cecil Hollingsworth and Jonathan Blount.

8. Prior to editor-in-chief of *Vibe*, Mimi Valdés' was editorial assistant, 1993-94; assistant editor, 1994-95; style editor, 1997-98; executive editor, 1999-2002; editor-at-large, 2002-03. After *Vibe*, Valdés became editor-in-chief of *Latina* from 2007 to 2010.

ENDNOTES

IMAGE CREDITS

‘Cruising Utopia’ with rafa esparza’s Corpo RanfLA: Terra Cruiser (2022)

1. Closeup of *Corpo RafLA: Terra Cruiser* performance, Art Basel Miami 2022. Photo by Fabian Guerrero.
2. The crew that collaborated with rafa esparza during the *Corpo RanfLA: Terra Cruiser* performance at Art Basel Miami, 2022. Left to right, Víctor Barragán, Guadalupe Rosales, Karla Ekatherine Canseco, and Gabriela Ruiz standing in front of the cyborg lowrider. Photo by Fabian Guerrero.
3. For *Corpo RanfLA* (2018) rafa esparza was transformed into a lowrider by Mario Ayala, inspired by the classic Gypsy Rose car. Photo by Fabian Guerrero.
4. Cauleen Smith riding *Corpo RanfLA: Terra Cruiser*, Art Basel Miami 2022. Photo by Fabian Guerrero.
5. Roll of tickets to ride *Corpo RanfLA: Terra Cruiser* at Art Basel Miami 2022. Photo by Fabian Guerrero.

Animating Memory: Affective Touch & Corporeality in the Work of Camilo Godoy and Carlos Martiel

1. Carlos Martiel, Muerte al olvido (Death to Oblivion), 2019. University of Maryland Art Gallery, College Park, USA. Curated by Patricia Ortega-Miranda and Taras W Matla. Photography by Jonathan Thorpe.
2. Camilo Godoy, What did they actually see?, (“Out of control”), 2018. Archival pigment print mounted on aluminum (printed 2021), 44 x 74 inches. Courtesy of the artist and PROXYCO Gallery.
3. Camilo Godoy, Choreographic Studies (Furious Dancing), 2015-2022. Archival pigment prints, transparency film, paper, glue, tape, and paint on wood panel, 16 x 20 inches. Photograph by Luis Corzo. Courtesy of the artist and PROXYCO Gallery.
4. Carlos Martiel with Brendan Mahoney. Continente, Y Gallery, Nueva York, EE.UU. Photo: Walter Wlodarczyk.

IMAGE CREDITS

Love Letter to Ana Mendieta

1. *Guanaroca (Esculturas Rupestres) [First Woman (Rupestrian Sculptures)]*, 1981. Black and white photograph. © The Estate of Ana Mendieta Collection, LLC. Courtesy Galerie Lelong & Co. Licensed by the Artist Rights Society (ARS), New York
2. *Anima, Silueta de Cohetes (Firework Piece)*, 1976. Super-8mm film transferred to high-definition digital media, color, silent. Running time: 2:23 minutes. © The Estate of Ana Mendieta Collection, LLC. Courtesy Galerie Lelong & Co. Licensed by the Artist Rights Society (ARS), New York.

Estrangement, Restlessness, and Rupture: Pablo Delano and the Rethinking of Puerto Rico

1. Installation view. *A Splendid Little War* (foreground) and military and flag-related photographs and captions from 1939-2019 | 2019-2021. *The Museum of the Old Colony*, Duke Hall Gallery of Fine Art, 2022.
2. *An Outing* (cropped). Page from unidentified book, circa 1898. Same photograph with caption: Gathering *'Cocoa de Agua' near San Juan, P.R.* in *Annual Reports of the War Department...*, Government Printing Office, Washington. D.C., 1899 | 2019. *The Museum of the Old Colony*, Duke Hall Gallery of Fine Art, 2022.
3. Installation view. *Old Colony Timeline*. Found objects: vintage Old Colony brand bottles and cans, circa 1940s-2017 | 2018. *The Museum of the Old Colony*, Duke Hall Gallery of Fine Art, 2022.
4. Installation view (cropped). *Flores Colón-Colón of Puerto Rico, A U.S. Air Cadet*, 1943, *Souvenir handkerchief*, and military-related photographs from 1939-1988 | 2019-2021. *The Museum of the Old Colony*, Duke Hall Gallery of Fine Art, 2022.

Mujeres Subversivas: Bolivian and Diasporic Feminist Art & Activism

1. *Territorio rebelde, territorio liberado*, 2022. Adriana Herbas. Courtesy of the artist.
2. *Becoming Animal*. Malena Rodríguez García, Jud Rojas Villazón and Lucia Herbas Cordero. Photo by Carolina Orellana Lopez.
3. Intersecciones Seculares Killa Kutiy Project. Malena Rodríguez García, Jud Rojas Villazón, and Lucia Herbas Cordero. Photo courtesy of the artist.
4. *Peregrino Series*, 2019. Natalia Barrientos. Courtesy of the artist.

CHARAS and The Reimagination of Loisaida

1. The Quality of Life in/ La Calidad de Vida en Loisaida, Vol. 1, No. 1, The Quality of Life, The Records of CHARAS, Inc., Archives of the Puerto Rican Diaspora. Centro de Estudios Puertorriqueños, Hunter College, CUNY, 1978, Magazine.
2. Eva Cockcroft et al., La Lucha Continua/ The Struggle Continues, 1985, photograph.
3. Untitled, Box 12, Folder 8, The Records of CHARAS, Inc., Archives of the Puerto Rican Diaspora. Centro de Estudios Puertorriqueños, Hunter College, CUNY, photograph.
4. Dome Construction, August 1974, The Records of CHARAS, Inc., Archives of the Puerto Rican Diaspora. Centro

de Estudios Puertorriqueños, Hunter College, CUNY, photograph.

"Where We Were Safe": Mapping Resilience in the 1970s Salsa Scene

1. Mike Amadeo, owner of Casa Amadeo, the last standing Latino record store in New York City. Photo: Marcos Echeverria Ortiz, 2020.
2. Since the late 1950s, Bethesda Fountain at Central Park has been occupied by salserxs and rumberos. This photo by Robert Iulo, circa 1975, captures the vibrant scene held at this public space.
3. "Where We Were Safe" has been selected in acclaimed film festivals and shown in 10 countries worldwide.
4. The book contains posters, photos, and other archival material, evidence of an influential yet forgotten culture of New York City's nightlife. Photo: Marcos Echeverria Ortiz, 2022.

The Evolution of Queer Latinx Nightlife in Los Angeles

1. House party in East LA hosted by party crew East LA Madness, 1993 (image from @veteranas_and_rucas)
2. *Queer Pupusa y Softcore Mija*, 2019. Photo by Amina Cruz.
3. House party in East LA hosted by party crew East LA Madness, 1993 (image from @veteranas_and_rucas)
4. Courtesy of Joaquín Gutierrez (Instagram: @og_goro)
5. *Shattered Glass*, curated by Melahn Frierson and AJ Girard, Jeffrey Deitch, Los Angeles, 2021. Artist: rafa esparza (@elrafaesparza) Photo by Joshua White (@joshuawhitephotography).
6. *Amor*, 2018. Photo by Amina Cruz.

Visualizing Chicanx Presence in the Rural Midwest

1. *Mexican Migrant Camp by Meijers*, June, 2021. 35mm.
2. *Grey Iron Foundry from Unity Park*, May, 2021. 35mm.
3. *Indiantown Radio Towers*, January, 2021. 35mm.
4. *Union Civica, Buena Vista*, June, 2021. 35mm.
5. *Houghton Elementary School* (Public school attended by my grandpa and closed in July 2015), July, 2021. 35mm.

Community By Design: On The Legacy of Casa Klumb in Puerto Rico

1. Henry and Else Klumb in the garden of Casa Klumb. © AACUPR - Archivo Arquitectura y Construcción Universidad Puerto Rico.
2. Living room with chairs and rug designed by Klumb. © AACUPR - Archivo Arquitectura y Construcción Universidad Puerto Rico.
3. Living room with chairs and rug designed by Klumb. © AACUPR - Archivo Arquitectura y Construcción Universidad Puerto Rico.
4. "Jardín de Klumb", painting by Alberto Zayas Montilla, 2021, photo courtesy of Sebastián Meltz-Collazo.
5. Casa Limaní Project, Adjuntas, Puerto Rico. February 2021. Photo Courtesy of the artist, Jorge González, Erika P. Rodríguez and CATAPULT Stay Home Artist Residency (SHAR)

6. Casa Limaní Project, Adjuntas, Puerto Rico. February 2021. Photo Courtesy of the artist, Jorge González, Erika P. Rodríguez and CATAPULT Stay Home Artist Residency (SHAR)
7. Casa Limaní Project, Adjuntas, Puerto Rico. February 2021. Photo Courtesy of the artist, Jorge González, Erika P. Rodríguez and CATAPULT Stay Home Artist Residency (SHAR)

The Latin Music Legacy of Ralph Pérez and Ansonia Records

1. The Porto Rico Brotherhood of America Junta Directiva 1928. Courtesy of Gerry Glass.
2. Ralph Perez (center), ca. 1930s. Courtesy of Gerry Glass.
3. Decca Records recording session featuring Canadian bandleader Guy Lombardo and Mexican composer Agustín Lara, ca. 1940s. Courtesy of Gerry Glass.
4. From left to right: Dominican composer Mario de Jesús Báez, unidentified man, Ralph Pérez, unidentified man; at Ansonia Records office, 992 Columbus Avenue, NY, ca. late 1950s. Courtesy of Gerry Glass.
5. Julito Rodríguez y su Trio with Ralph Pérez at the Ansonia Records office, 992 Columbus Avenue, NY, ca.1950s. Courtesy of Gerry Glass.
6. Ralph Pérez and Myrta Silva during her televised program Tira y Tápate in Puerto Rico, circa 1960s. Courtesy of Gerry Glass.

From Ebony and Jet to Vibe, Black Latina Visual Media Representations Provides a Blueprint for Latinx Media

1. *Jet* Magazine, 1981.
2. *Jet* Magazine, 1976.
3. *Vibe* Magazine, 2016.
4. *Vibe Vixen* Magazine, Holiday Issue, 2006.

Past is Present: The Young Lords Party Revisited

1. Young Lords Party Rally at Queens County Jail, 1969. Photo by Hiram Maristany. Collection of the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture. Courtesy Market Road Films.
2. Young Lords Party member Denise Oliver at a New York City rally to free political prisoners. December, 1969. Photo by Bev Grant.
3. Young Lords, The Garbage Offensive. SE corner of 111th Street and 3rd Avenue, 1969. Photo by Hirm Maristany. Courtesy Market Road Films.
4. Abuelita Maristany, 1969. Photo by Hiram Maristany. Courtesy Market Road Films.

The Latinx Census Racial Category Debate And How to Unite Latinx Across Racial Differences

1. Proposed Example for Self-Response Data Collections: Combined Question with Minimum and Detailed Categories
2. 2022. Published by Beacon Press.

Crisis Projects: 25 Years of AgitArte in Puerto Rico and The Global Diaspora

1. El Estudiante Militante (2011). Courtesy of AgitArte.

IMAGE CREDITS

2. Los Vividores del Pueblo (2008). Government and Church, two of the characters from Papel Machete's first street theater piece, dramatize the shady alliances behind Resolution 99, which would have given way to a referendum to outlaw same-sex marriage through a constitutional amendment. Courtesy of AgitArte.
3. Se Acabaron las Promesas (2017). Design by José "Primo" Hernández and Jorge Díaz. Photo by Javier Maldonado O'Farrill. Courtesy of AgitArte.
4. Mutual Aid Network (2017-2018). Courtesy of AgitArte.
5. Solidaridad y Sobrevivencia para Nuestra Liberación (2017). Artwork by Estefanía Rivera Cortés. One of the two panels used in the cantastoria of the same name, also produced as a poster. Courtesy of AgitArte.
6. Aquí Servimos Solidaridad (2017). Artwork by Javier Maldonado O'Farrill. Courtesy of AgitArte.

IMAGE CREDITS

The Latinx Project at New York University explores and promotes U.S. Latinx Art, Culture and Scholarship through creative and interdisciplinary programs. Founded in 2018, it serves as a platform to foster critical public programming and for hosting artists and scholars. We are especially committed to examining and highlighting the multitude of Latinx identities as central to developing a more inclusive and equitable vision of Latinx Studies.

LATINXPROJECT.NYU.EDU

THE
LATINX
PROJECT

$25.00
ISBN 979-8-9889535-0-0
52500>
9 798988 953500