

COLONIALISM AND NATIONAL IDENTITY: THE SPECIAL CASE OF VISUAL  
ART IN PUERTO RICO

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by

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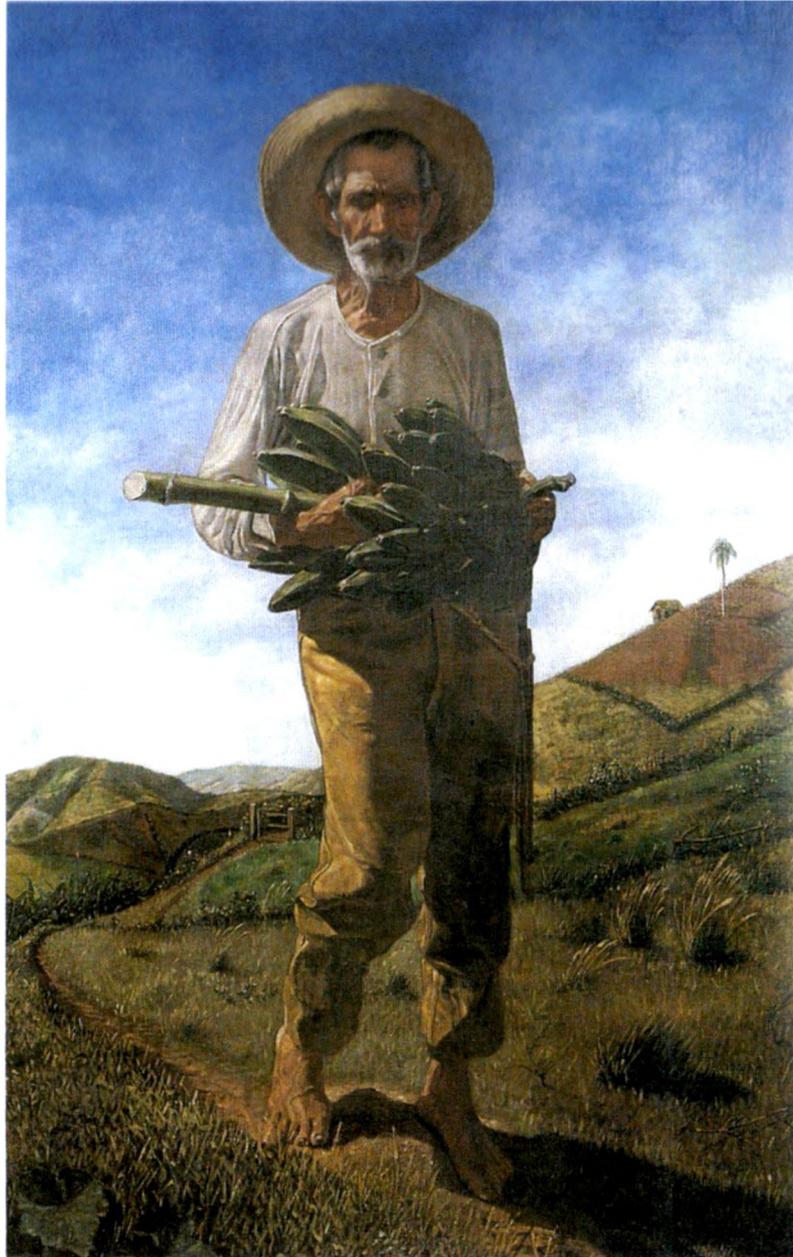
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*Pan nuestro (Our Daily Bread), Ramon Frade, 1905; Puerto Rico: Arte e Identidad, 2004; p. 80*

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First of all I want to thank my parents Juan and Zenaida. They gave me a wonderful foundation in language, culture and history. They showed me and my sisters as much of the world as they could and always found a way to make it back home and not forget who we were. Thanks to their strong desire to resolve lack of opportunities in their lives and their disregard for fear and hesitancy I was able experience different parts of the world and be raised in various countries. They raised me to believe that I could achieve anything through hard work and that I could do things that had not been done yet in our family and our people in order to bring progress to both.

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parents. Because of this lack of fear I was able to really interact and understand common experiences between those who reside in Puerto Rico and in Cuba. Both nations are beautiful in their own way and their people are some of the most courageous and resourceful individuals that I have ever met. They do not allow the situations imposed onto them by their states to interfere with the enjoyment of their lives and the love, caring, and respect they share with members of their community and between the nations.

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**ABSTRACT**

**COLONIALISM AND NATIONAL IDENTITY: THE SPECIAL CASE OF VISUAL  
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by

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The purpose of this study is to show how colonialism affects free expression by analyzing the expression of visual art from the nations of Puerto Rico and Cuba comparatively. Cuba and Puerto Rico are very comparable in history, colonialism, anti-imperialism, and cultural production. After the rupture in 1959 by Cuba due to the Cuban Revolution and Puerto Rico's adoption of the Commonwealth status in 1952, the nations' states became ideological opposites: colonial (Puerto Rico) and anti-colonial (Cuba). This fundamental difference presents an opportunity to isolate modern-day colonialism and observe its effects on citizens' ability to freely express their selves. The study uses a triangulation of in-depth interviews, a quantitative content analysis, and a qualitative content analysis over the visual art produced by

both nations between 1950 and 1965; and ethnographic field research analyzing the presentation of art in both respective nations via the art museum. The study concludes that the history and events that have occurred and continue to occur in Puerto Rico are kept obscure by its isolation due to its in-between status that preserves the status quo and domination by the ruling class that is both foreign and local for Puerto Rico.

Colonialism has created a dependency where the citizens of Puerto Rico have been disempowered to wait for change instead of creating it and the opportunities that arose for artists to paint and document the turbulent history have been suppressed until recently.

Material that was once considered subversive and challenging of the status quo is now on display because of modern orientalism that is manifested by both the United States' multinationals and the Puerto Rican state's interest in promoting global tourism and a distinct national/cultural identity which is more profitable within this industry. In other words, Puerto Rico's anti-colonial history documented by visual artists has found a profitable market in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and displays a much different history than what has been told by imperialist interests in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Since the fall of absolute monarchies the nation-state has evolved and carved the globe into sections based on established communities. These nation-states need three objective truths in order to exist among the others: *the census, the map, and the museum* (Anderson, 2001). The museum contains what the nation wants to put on display that gives the territory and its people ancestral legitimacy. The museum shows the nation's history. Visual art is one of the many artifacts that is on display within a museum and like the other forms of fine art, explains the subject matter within the artist. The artist is a member of the popular sector within a nation-state context. "Art does not occur in a void. It trickles in from social reality, from its conflicts, from the process of change to which reality is subject" (Martínó 2004a: 84). Art, a manifestation of culture, is a form of expression that is central in building community.

Puerto Rico, a colonial territory of the United States, has a colonial government that operates as a direct subordinate under the U.S. Congress. It is one of the few remaining colonies in the modern world. Puerto Ricans are born American citizens regardless of whether they are in Puerto Rico or on the mainland. They do not vote in any mainland elections and pay taxes to support their own democratically elected colonial government as well as mainland taxes. The colonial government is an apparatus that serves under the U.S. Congress and the head of state is the American president. On the

one hand, the state heavily funds the institutions of visual art albeit selectively. On the other hand, the majority of art in Puerto Rico has been a vehicle of resistance for the popular masses against cultural assimilation from its colonizer.

This study intends to analyze the relationship between its colonial situation and the expressions produced, as seen in visual art. First, I will study the institution of art in Puerto Rico. I will explore how the colonial state uses and promotes art. Second, I will compare the manifested expressions of Puerto Rico to the manifested expressions of Cuba. Puerto Rico and Cuba are distinct nations that operate as ideological opposites. Puerto Rico is a colony with a state that operates under that of the leading world hegemon while Cuba is an anti-colonial nation that has expelled the same colonizer. Puerto Rico is globalized/modernized in a way that accepts everything foreign while Cuba does the exact opposite, but their cultures are similar in ways that make these distinctions interesting to analyze through what those cultures have produced in art. For the study, I will use a variety of research methodologies. I will conduct in-depth interviews with local informants on art (ie. museum curators). I will also conduct ethnographic field research on the museums of Puerto Rico. Finally, I will conduct a content analysis of art from Puerto Rico and Cuba to compare and contrast the two nations' expressions in order to understand the influences evident.

## **II. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **PART I: ART AND SOCIOLOGY**

Art is a socially valued activity that has documented human civilization since its beginnings. A successful work of art transfers reality through an expression. The receiver of this reality accepts it as one far different from his/her own. Symbols from within the art link the different worlds. Bernard Gortais (2003) wrote on the various forms of art and what the changes in the various forms and techniques mean. Within this context, Gortais explains the significance of art as a form of individual expression. He writes that the major function of the artist is to act as a mediator between a representation and a public, not to transmit it. "Each work of art will resonate in its own way over the whole range of human emotions and each person will be touched in a different way" (1243). Throughout the changes in form and technique that art has undergone, this function remains the same.

The concept of aesthetics as part of the ideological superstructure has also been explored by Theodor Adorno (1984). Aesthetics is beauty and in combination, aesthetic symbols are aimed at arousing emotions in people. Aesthetics is considered to be the objective arena in art instead of the subjective. But in contemporary constructivist sociology it is widely understood, regardless of the formal definition of art, that artists, art schools, and museums will define what art is, and aesthetic beauty is subjective, based

on cultural specifics and individual interpretations. According to Adorno, aesthetic judgments are created by economic,<sup>4</sup> political and/or moral values. Thus the ruling class has the power to define beauty.

Leon Trotsky (1957) wrote *Literature and Revolution* in 1925 and identified the problem seen in classical/bourgeois art. He saw that the images displayed did not connect with the social reality of the masses. Thus, art was a tool of the bourgeoisie used to display aesthetic beauty. Until the proletariat could produce its own art and have the power to define art, art would be disconnected from the masses and remain in subordination to the ruling class. Since the publication, and not directly because of his publication, art styles changed to be more democratically determined. The changes in art (changes in materials and forms/goals) are derived from socio-historical changes (Gortais 2005).

In Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* (2005), the author provides a critical interpretation over the rise and spread of nationalism. He explains that with the increase of literacy by the masses, revolutions were then able to overthrow monarchies and bring about new nation-states that ended up carving up territories and establishing boundaries. These new nations were only attainable if the masses within these territories imagined themselves as part of the nation. This imagination would allow the masses to uphold the nation. Anderson paints the picture of nationalism by using literature (e.g. novels, poems, essays) as his unit of analysis along with official historical documents. In the penultimate chapter of his book, he acknowledges that for the national imagination to exist, the state must provide a map of the territory to its people so they can display "the

geography of its domain” (164); a census to show “the nature of the human beings it ruled” (164); and a museum to display “the legitimacy of its ancestry (164).

Anderson (2006) also published *Under Three Flags; Anarchism and the Anti-colonial Imagination* which deals very closely with the social movements that were experienced in Puerto Rico as well as the Philippines and Cuba during the time when world power was being transferred. Empires were racing to acquire lands where the majority of their wealth would be acquired. The anti-colonial imagination came from the work of Creole, native, and international intellectuals that were able to connect masses with the fine arts and philosophically liberating written works and encouraged the people to imagine their selves and their culture alongside the ones that dominate them.

Art has been well documented in its importance for social movements. In 1951 David L. Dowd documented how visual art was employed by the French Nationalists to mobilize public sentiment in favor of the new France and French nationalism. Propaganda was spread through magazines, newspapers, pamphlets, and other media but was only available to members of the aristocracy and the church. Because literacy was not widespread in France at the time of the revolution, the works of French thinkers such as Rousseau, Montesquieu, Voltaire, and Diderot that presented the philosophies and virtues from the "patriotic" sentiments did not make it to the masses. It was not until French artists painted the French Nationalist cause that these sentiments were finally felt by all members of French society.

Another example of how visual art was used to mobilize public sentiments is Jacqueline Adams' study in 2002. Adams performed an ethnographic study on art as part of a women's protest and social movement in Pinochet's Chile. Her study suggests that

art plays a very important role in social movements, which use it for “framing, to attract resources, to communicate information about themselves, to foster useful emotions,” and as a symbol for “communicating a coherent identity, marking membership, and cementing commitment to the movement” (21).

## **PART II: ART AND COLONIALISM**

### **PUERTO RICAN VISUAL ART**

Puerto Rican art is for the most part recognized for the display of the Puerto Rican identity. The creation of *Puerto Ricanness* has been an emancipating process that according to much of the visual art on display is still going on. According to Osiris Delgado (2004) the Puerto Rican identity has developed from a three-step process.

The first step of this process began in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Puerto Rico, as well as the Philippines, Guam, Cuba, the Dominican Republic amongst others, were incorporated under the Kingdom of Spain during its colonization of the New World. After the extermination of the native people and due to great discoveries of gold in Mexico and Peru by Spanish conquistadors, the isolated island became the kingdom’s easternmost bastion of its New World territories. According to Silvia Álvarez Curbelo (2004a), “The isolation and indifference of the Military authorities gave way to certain cultural forms, to a syncretism of Hispanic, negro and even indigenous elements in folk religion, cuisine, idioms, music, and mind” (14). Folklore was created on the island of Puerto Rico as well as the other colonies under Spain during their conquest of the new world. Benedict Anderson (2005) explains this creation of comparative folklore as a designed process by the Spanish empire in order for the vastly different Spanish colonies located in different

regions of the world to be able to view each other comparatively; the land, the culture, its people, and each others' role under the Spanish kingdom. This folklore was intended to bridge these sub-nations under the larger kingdom. As the material wealth from the New World made it back to Spain, so did the product of the mixing of cultures as creoles with new experiences and realities made it back to Spain. This created a feeling of pride. Individuals had made a name for themselves and honored the place where they came from. Creoles from Puerto Rico "who excelled" outside of their fatherland were recognized, and because of this a feeling of being Puerto Rican would arise; which is the first step in the creation of *Puerto Ricanness* (Delgado 2004).

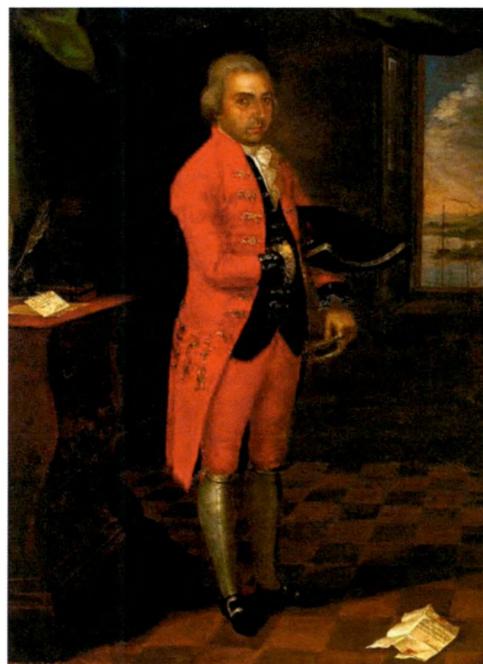
Many changes occurred in the New World during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century due to the various power struggles and changes in Europe, lack of capital in the Spanish Kingdom and the discovery of gold and silver in Mexico and Peru. For example, under the Bourbon dynasty (1765-1782), Puerto Rico was introduced to the liberalization of trade restrictions (associated with free trade), more educated and progressive governors, and the foundation and construction of many of the island's towns that improved the quality of life by standard western judgment (Álvarez Curbelo 2004a).

The second step in the process of creating the Puerto Rican identity came at the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century when the institution of art was beginning to blossom on the island and aspiring artists were now able to travel to the metropole to study the various art forms under the academy. Folk architecture soon followed and it was an artist by the name of Jose Campeche who was the first to display Puerto Rican people and Puerto Rican landscapes (Delgado 2004). These visual images now provided an example and an

illustrative confirmation that there was a distinguishable group of people in a distinguishable land under the Kingdom of Spain.



*Dama a caballo*, Jose Campeche , 1785; *Puerto Rico: Arte e Identidad*, 2004; p. 21.



*Don Jose Mas Ferre*, Jose Campeche , 1795; Artstor.

**Figure 1 Origins of National Identity (People):** The paintings follow the standard of state officials and popular life that was painted in Europe previously and during this same time. Incorporation to the global community depended on assimilation into the Western art establishment.

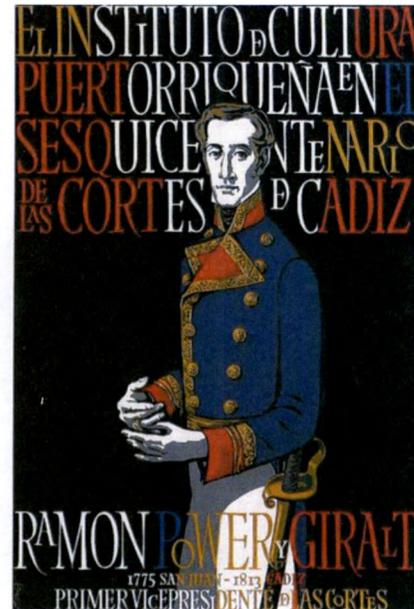
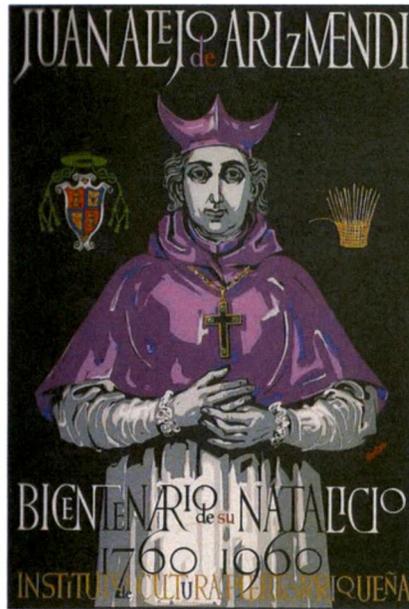
The population, now flourishing outside of the Spanish governed metropolis, developed distinguishable traits and a culture farther away from the sphere of colonial government influence. For example, outside of the capital city of San Juan, Puerto Rico was a “nest of pirates” (Álvarez Curbelo 2004a: 15). During this period, Puerto Rico endured attacks by the French, Dutch, and the English that attempted several times to capture the island but failed to achieve long term residency.

"When the island went through the greatest invasion in its history, led by the British under Abercromby and Harvey in 1797, slaves as well as indigent *jibaros* helped defend the besieged city of San Juan. ... During the dramatic days of April, while the city of San Juan was

heavily bombed by the invaders, a mulatto painter witnessed the massive display of a blossoming identity. Along with religious subjects and colonial characters typical of an official painter, Jose Campeche would later paint his homage to San Juan on a small ex-voto without figures of the city” (Álvarez Curbelo 2004a:15).

Puerto Rico was recognized as an overseas province of Spain in 1809; the same time Napoleon occupied the majority of the Iberian Peninsula. In the same year, Jose Campeche would pass away but would be recognized for the service he provided his people. In a ceremony to inaugurate the Delegate to the Spanish Courts, Ramón Power y Giralt, Archbishop Juan Alejo de Arizmendi (native born Puerto Rican) gave his Episcopal ring and told Ramón Power: “*Como prenda segura que os afirmara en la memoria, vuestra resolución de proteger y sostener los derechos de nuestros compatriotas, como yo mismo tengo de morir por mi amada grey*” [I give you this ring as a sure token that will always remind you of your resolution to protect and support the rights of our fellow countrymen just as I am committed to dying for my beloved flock] (Delgado 2004: 50). This moment has been credited as the birth of Puerto Rican identity—thus the third step in the process; the recognition of a fatherland as distinct from the colonial metropole.

*Juan Alejo de Arizmendi,  
Lorenzo Homar, 1960;  
Puerto Rico: Arte e  
Identidad, 2004, p. 227.*



*Ramon Power y Giralt,  
Lorenzo Homar, 1963;  
Puerto Rico: Arte e  
Identidad, 2004, p. 227.*

**Figure 2 Origins of National Identity (History):** This memory has been painted repeatedly because of its significance in the existence of the Puerto Rican community.

Puerto Rico was able to send representatives to the Spanish court but soon after those constitutional reforms were enacted, they were reversed as Spain returned to the autocratic monarchy that had existed previously. The 19<sup>th</sup> century brought many new reforms that rapidly augmented the population and the economy while expanding the local character of the island. The revolutionary period in the Americas (1776-1825) directly increased the population of the island and expanded the local character. Puerto Rico became a safe haven for dissenters, colonial loyalists, and new business for its political stability. Because of Haiti's revolution in 1791, the new country's production of sugar and coffee came to a stop. A large and politically strong group of Creole and immigrant farmers from Haiti "channeled their investments into agriculture for exporting purposes" (15) on the island of Puerto Rico. The most visible change in Puerto Rico of this was the new sugar mills that rapidly appeared all over the island's north coast.

Coffee production was encouraged in the west and tobacco in the valleys near the coast (Álvarez Curbelo 2004b).

Poverty and political estrangement plagued Puerto Rico for the remainder of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the people began to believe that current situations in Puerto Rico were better solved from within instead of through the dependency on an empire that was struggling itself. The island's first move into modernity occurred when most other territories in the American hemisphere were fighting for their independence. Because of the revolutions that occurred between 1776 and 1825, Puerto Rican Creoles moved toward greater freedom because of fear in the metropole of losing the rest of their colonies.

At the time when the country timidly entered the world market with sugar, coffee and cotton, Creole claims were addressed rather at an incipient project of institutional and cultural modernity that would take Puerto Rico out of its backward state." (Álvarez Curbelo 2004b: 37)

The Spanish metropole encouraged the entry of immigrants to control the new sugar mill economy. In turn, Spanish immigrants monopolized the commercial sector and bureaucracy - civil, church and military. The colonial government set up a sort of sanitary barrier around the island to ward off progressive ideas that could subvert the Spanish rule. Between 1825 and 1837, Puerto Rico became a slave society; strongly repressive and militarized. The liberal press was silenced in order to turn back the island to its Spanish roots; slave uprisings were smothered; infamous legal codes were decreed to regulate work, public conduct, and speech; native initiatives for more self-government and adequate representation before the Spanish courts were abridged and the island was

denied (once again) of having a university (so the few island residents that wanted to get a professional title had to travel abroad to do so) (Álvarez Curbelo 2004c).

## **STRUGGLE FOR INDEPENDENCE BEFORE THE SPANISH AMERICAN WAR**

In 1868, with support from Chile, Peru, Ecuador, The Dominican Republic (Luperón and Betances agreeing to overthrow Baez in the Dominican Republic as a return favor) and Venezuela, a small but incredibly significant uprising (still remembered today as “El Grito de Lares”) occurred and was quickly crushed. The uprising culminated decades of displeasure with the insular government and the repression of the Puerto Rican national identity. *“Los fundadores de la República en el 68 se batieron solamente por el principio de que ninguna nación será dueña del destino de otra nación”* [The founders of the Republic in ’68 fought solely for the principal that no nation shall be the owner of another nations destiny (Albizu Campos 1974: 59). The result was not a failure since shortly thereafter Puerto Rico again received provincial status and Spanish citizenship thanks to a liberal monarchy led by an Italian King (Fernos-Isern 1953). Puerto Ricans were now able to participate in special elections and to organize into recognized political parties. In 1869 Puerto Ricans voted on a special reform that granted slaves freedom. By 1873 some thirty-two thousand slaves were freed and the institution completely abolished (Fernos-Isern 1953).

In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, revolutions were taking place in Cuba and the Philippines. Challenges from Puerto Rico continued. In 1897, Luis Muñoz Rivera convinced the Spanish government to grant autonomy for Puerto Rico as well as Cuba. The following

year, out of fear of completely losing its colonies, Spain allowed an autonomous government to be organized. For both Cuba and Puerto Rico, the new governments consisted of a Spanish appointed Governor and a partially elected parliamentary structure. The new parliamentary structure allowed the islands to deal first hand with monetary matters, the mail, banking, tariffs, and taxation in general. A trade system was to be established on the agreement basis between Spain and Puerto Rico and Spain and Cuba (Fernos-Isern 1953).

The growing Cuban exile population in the United States gained significant support in their struggle for independence. The United States, already being Cuba and Puerto Rico's largest consumer of sugar, saw that it had a vested interest in these territories that it considered to be under the North American sphere of influence outlined in the Monroe Doctrine of 1823. In the same month that Puerto Rico and Cuba were to have elections for the new autonomous government, the USS Maine exploded in the bay of Havana. Very shortly thereafter, Spain would be involved in a war with the United States and lose all of its overseas territories to the new world hegemon.

#### **NEW AMERICAN POLICIES; ASSIMILATION VS. SEPARATION**

The United States incorporated Cuba, Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Philippines as territories and annexed the archipelago of Hawaii between the years 1895 to 1898. General Calixto Garcia of Cuba as well as Emilio Aguinaldo of the Philippines along with leaders of all the territories were forbidden from attending the treaty signing at Paris where the United States forced Spain to many unreasonable terms (Destiny of Empires 1998). Puerto Rico was war booty to the United States and the culture that existed was

taken for granted. The island was transferred as a colony from Spain to the United States, was misspelled in the original Treaty of Paris as *Porto Rico* (it was later corrected in 1932 after more than 30 years of lobbying for its proper spelling). Territories such as Hawaii, Alaska, Guam, Samoa, Cuba, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, and the Dominican Republic would either be occupied, incorporated as an American territory, and/or become a U.S. state in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Francisco Oller y Cestero is one of Puerto Rico's most significant artists. He would study his craft in Madrid during the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. After his studies in Madrid, he moved to Paris and enrolled at the *Louvre* and found a friendship with his compatriot Dr. Betances (New York Times 1984). Greeted by great success after his paintings began to surface in European art circles, back in Puerto Rico he used the success to fund and open The Free Academy of Art of Puerto Rico. Oller would paint the reality of the island's landscapes, people, and culture. These works would find a greater position of importance after the American invasion occurred and the occupation pushed the island towards Anglo assimilation.

Oller paintings captured the social injustices of the Puerto Rican people, contrasted those images with those of the colonizers, depicted the Taino culture and race within the Puerto Rican identity and that of the negro race and its virtues (Delgado 2004: 51).

Francisco Oller fled American troops in 1898 and ended up painting *Hacienda Aurora*, which has become identified as the beginning of Puerto Rican art (Garcia Gutierrez 1996) now that Puerto Rico was separate from the European academy.



*Hacienda Aurora*, Francisco Oller y Cestero, 1898; Artstor.

**Figure 3 Origins of National Identity (Territory):** This painting was painted in a realist style but features a sugarcane plantation and its workers, something not known for its aesthetic qualities. It was meant to document the memory of what Puerto Rico was before the North American invasion of 1898.

By separating itself from the academy, Puerto Rican art controlled its own destiny. Interesting to note is that, as well as other Puerto Rican painters, Oller rejected avant-garde styles that were occurring worldwide so that the messages of sociopolitical criticism would not be lost in Modernist styles that could possibly not have the same effects on its viewers. New Modernist forms “were not art which could evoke spiritual forces with which to nurture a resistance against a cultural state of siege. This was not a mere political or aesthetic issue, but a matter of sheer survival of the Puerto Rican personality as a people” (Torres Matinó 2004a: 87). Many of the artists believed that if they would take on these new styles, the public that viewed their works and more importantly their messages would be lost.

Art designed to mobilize public sentiment became stronger in criticism and more abundant in the quantity of works produced at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century after the North American invasion and occupation of 1898. Puerto Rico was acquired directly by the

United States and the political administration of Puerto Rico by the United States during the first years of its incorporation as a national territory was assigned to the military forces of occupation. These forces immediately began attempting to rid Puerto Rico of its national identity in order to better assimilate the nation while exercising total control over the national economy, the ideological superstructure, the communication media, the educational institutions, and all of the agencies responsible for establishing the norms for the nation's life (Ojeda Rios 2002). The first step was changing the official language:

*Abolirá por todos los medios a su alcance el sistema obligatorio de enseñanza en la lengua del invasor, que desorienta y embrutece a nuestra juventud, en grave perjuicio de nuestra personalidad cultural. Procurara mantener estrechas relaciones internacionales culturales y políticas, especialmente con las naciones de nuestro origen (Albizu Campos 1974: 64). [It will abolish all means that are in their hands once their reach extends to the obligatory system of education in the language of the invader, which disorients and retards our youth, at the grave consequence of cultural personality. It seeks to maintain narrow political and cultural international relations, especially with the nations of our origins.]*

The implementation of the English language was part of an extensive political educational agenda that was employed as a goal to further incorporate American democratic values and free-market basis for government in a larger scheme of economic and imperial conquest. It is necessary for Puerto Rico to become an ideal center for American production consisting of low wages, tax breaks, a large unemployed labor pool, and a business friendly local government filled with pro-American representatives. Language is foundational for a nation. It is the basis for reality and whoever possesses dominion over the language more adequately is in a privileged position. In Puerto Rico, there was a new population: Americans that did not speak Spanish. Spanish was now called the vernacular; it no longer was the language of mandatory instruction. The new

municipal governments were to serve as “a sort of kindergarten” in which Puerto Ricans could learn the ways of “popular government” under American leadership (Headquarters Department of Porto Rico 1899, United States Congress 1904: 222).

Puerto Rico went from a colony to a “possession” under American rule. Under the Treaty of Paris though, it assured that the territory of Puerto Rico was to have no less autonomy than it already had possessed under Spain. This being said, the island could not be further assimilated to the U.S. nor become anything closer to the U.S. than a free and associated autonomous state with a close relationship to the mainland. What was not covered in the treaty was the readjustment of relations once the already set-up monarchical parliament was converted to a republican congressional system (Fernos-Isern 1953: 79).

Before the American invasion in 1898, The United States was a nation held in high esteem not because of their economic and military strength, but for its long standing tradition of liberation. It was a great disappointment for the people of Puerto Rico to see that the United States Congress, in its legislative act for Puerto Rico, without consultation with the people of Puerto Rico, created a governmental structure for the island and established political, economic, and fiscal relationships between Puerto Rico and the United States Government (Fernos-Isern 1953).

The public education system in Puerto Rico was a project to reinforce hegemony and teach Puerto Ricans the ways of American democratic values and governance (Go 2000). As free market values and business began to flourish in Puerto Rico so did the ills of the capitalist system along with new problems faced by Puerto Ricans that were regularly normalized through education. As part of the United States, the island enjoyed many of the accomplishments that the mainland did. Technological advancements in communication, media, and education throughout society was achieved in the United

States and available to the island. Puerto Rico became a bridge between prosperous American business and Latino culture and traditions in the southern hemisphere. Puerto Rico was the model society that was put on display in order to demonstrate to the rest of South and Central America the benefits of free-trade and incorporation into the American sector of the global economy (Albizu Campos 1974).

Puerto Rico had gained more autonomy from Spain, than what was organized after “U.S. liberation.” The upper chamber became so integrated with American appointees that majority rule was next to impossible. Puerto Rico remained a colony at a period in time when classical colonialism was now an outdated means of being subjected to power and exploitation (Dietz 1976).

The Jones Act of 1917 granted U.S. citizenship to Puerto Ricans on both the mainland and the island while also making Puerto Rican men eligible for the draft; two months before United States’ participation in the first world war (Dietz 1976). All residents of territories were actually already eligible for the draft. What the new citizenship allowed that was not available previously was that it permitted Puerto Ricans to freely enter the American mainland. This and the American dollar being incorporated as the official currency facilitated temporary and permanent migration for employment and gave Puerto Ricans the characteristics of a transient nation between the colony and colonizers. This flowing movement back and forth facilitated the exchange of technology, ideas, and societal trends influencing aesthetics such as architecture and fashion. But the changes were not equally received throughout Puerto Rico:

Conferring U.S. citizenship does not compensate for the trade-off of Puerto Rico’s exploitation, colonization and invisibility. The role of citizenship imposition is to mask colonial relations, inverting the coin to make it seem as if Puerto Ricans choose their status...

Ironically, economic dependency furthers the colonization, migration and settlement experiences. Citizenship is not a blessing (Vidal-Ortiz 2004: 191).

Many events and situations progressively pushed the native Puerto Rican people to a social and economic subordination in their own land.

The first period of North American occupation of Puerto Rico brought widespread and rapid changes that were achieved without the consent of a non-English speaking/reading/writing native population. An entire community of people who had no power over their destinies before the invasion now had less considering that the population was foreigner in its own land. The little documentation that exists from this period by the Puerto Rican community itself are the paintings that were produced that were intended to create a critical consciousness and establish memories. The actions manifested after this period by a collective community of Puerto Ricans show that the reality experienced by the native population was far different from the reality that has been recorded through official state documents and state propaganda that is still available today.

#### **MOVEMENTS OF RESISTANCE: A CAUSE FOR VISUAL ART**

As for Puerto Rican politics, absentee investors continued to acquire greater power over the economy; much of their surpluses were invested into manipulating local elections (Jimenez de Wagenheim 1973). American business and the colonial government became one and the same once the American appointed governor of Puerto Rico abolished all oppositional political parties that favored Puerto Rican autonomy and independence (Albizu Campos 1974). Anti-American and anti-imperialist sentiments and

forces trying to organize were smothered as more and more native officials in office were replaced with men from the United States.

Dr. Pedro Albizu Campos, returning from service in WWI would, organize the Puerto Rico Nationalist Party in the mid 1920's. Agriculture, industry, commerce and the communications media were already practically controlled by Americans in power. Puerto Rican teachers were made to teach English and family farms were lead to believe that branches of foreign banks were backed by millions when in fact they were suffering from symptoms of the Great Depression. Land owners became slaves of exploitative enterprises and eventually had to give the farm over to creditors that repossessed and auctioned off farms systematically. After running for the senate and participating in colonial elections and losing, Albizu Campos would distance himself from participation in the state and instead take it on first as a social movement and then adopting the means of separatist militancy. Albizu Campos was able to organize numerous strikes and spread a consciousness about the inadequacy of the colonial administration and its purposely forgotten goal of independence. He became Puerto Rico's leader against American cultural aggression.

Albizu Campos as a colonial public enemy, threatened all aspects of American presence on the island. He saw the cultural aggression imposed by the United States as a way to create 1) an island factory made up of an enormous labor surplus that worked for low wages and participated in free trade, 2) a military occupation that would strategically position itself for Central American, Caribbean, and South American conflicts, and 3) Americanized population of Latino's that would serve an example of the benefits of U.S. annexation, free trade, and direct American investment and spread the new American

hegemony across the hemisphere. He believed that the battle for Puerto Rico had a greater meaning for the rest of Latin America; therefore Latin America should aid in the liberation of Puerto Rico. The emancipatory cause for Puerto Ricans against their oppressors was front lines to *Latifundismo* (the complete replacement of Latino cultures for more false-conscious Americanized peoples participating in the free market) (Albizu Campos 1974).

Theodore Roosevelt Jr., appointed governor from 1929 to 1932, toured the countryside of Puerto Rico to witness the disaster left by the global depression, a major earthquake, a tsunami and several hurricanes including Hurricane San Felipe II (a category 5 in 1928) (EM-DAT, Emergency Events Database 2008). Representatives introduced and appointed by Governor Roosevelt were to revive the island to bring prosperity in some way or another to the island:

He introduces the party leaders in the legislature to the Davidson Brothers, as our saviors. These newcomers are going to build, Roosevelt says, a great refrigeration plant for native fruits; they have many millions of dollars, and they can distribute many millions... the Legislature must give them 6,000 square meters of land on San Juan's waterfront, to build the great docks that will permit the entry of large ships. The solvency of Davidson Brothers is investigated. They are incorporated in Florida with a capital of \$25,000...these gentlemen are mere agents for the *yanqui* octopus, the United Fruit Company, and now we understand the presence in San Juan of a representative of United Fruit (Dr. Pedro Albizu Campos in a Speech translated in *El Mundo*, November 16, 1933; Albizu Campos 1974: 98-99) .

Albizu Campos and others were aware of global capitalist/imperialist agenda behind American presence in the Caribbean and they would represent the anger and frustration of their starving people.

The misery experienced by Puerto Rico, as well as many other Latino countries that experienced U.S. intervention, during the great depression years was enough to gain attention from the U.S. government for the Puerto Rican Reconstruction Administration (PRRA). Under President Franklin D. Roosevelt, the Good Neighbor Policy was enacted in order to have better relations with Latin American neighbors. Basically, the United States would no longer intervene in an armed and aggressive fashion. As FDR himself put it during his inaugural address in 1933: "In the field of world policy I would dedicate this nation to the policy of the good neighbor--the neighbor who resolutely respects himself and, because he does so, respects the rights of others" (Roosevelt 1933).

Between 1934 and 1936, Albizu Campos was able to organize numerous strikes critical of the colonial situation (including a cane workers strike that brought the sugar industry to a complete stop). In 1934, Major General Blanton Winship was appointed governor largely in order to suppress the nationalist movement. Winship appointed Colonel Francis Riggs as Chief of the insular police; Riggs had just left Nicaragua as he assisted U.S. backed future dictator Anastasio Somoza. Under Winship and Riggs, the FBI is first brought to Puerto Rico along with newer and higher caliber weaponry in order to deal with the political agitators (Albizu Campos 1974).

The University of Puerto Rico was the center for Puerto Rican intellectualism and resistance to colonialism. The student body, alumni, and faculty became a powerful organization that staged strikes and protests that would not allow colonial administrations to appoint their own representatives into the position of university president and board of trustees. In fact, the university demanded that anyone appointed by the colonial governor

be an individual that “must have made a name in the arts, in science, or in letters” (Jimenez de Wagenheim 1973).

In 1935, Col. Riggs ordered his forces to open fire on University protesters known as the Río Piedras Massacre. Col. Riggs then declared war on the nationalists; Albizu Campos (a day later) declared war on the *Yanquis* (La Voz Del Centro, Oct. 22, 2006). The following February (1936), two Nationalists (Hiram Rosado and Elias Beauschamp) entered the police station in Río Piedras to find Col. Riggs alone; they would murder him in retaliation and later be captured that same night, taken back to the station where they would be executed (Albizu Campos 1974; La Voz Del Centro, Oct. 22, 2006). Albizu Campos as well as other nationalists were arrested on charges of sedition; when tried he was found innocent. The judge would retry Albizu Campos with a jury consisting of ten Americans and two Puerto Ricans who would find him guilty and sentenced him to 10 years in an American federal penitentiary. As a protest of Albizu Campos’ imprisonment, students organized a march in Ponce, Puerto Rico which ended in the killing of 21 of the nationalist sympathizers by police. The incident became known as *La Masacre de Ponce*. Governor Blanton Winship was removed from his position in 1938 after an attempt on his life and lenient laws applicable to appointed officials were not able to find him formally responsible for the strict repression and chaos.

Albizu Campos would return to Puerto Rico in 1948 and upon his return was asked to speak at the University of Puerto Rico amidst great controversy. Students and faculty protested and went on strike to defend his presence which would then bring some of the harshest repression against the Puerto Rican identity. *La Ley 53; Ley de la Mordaza* or gag law was enacted as a result of protests. The *Ley de la Mordaza* made it illegal to

display a Puerto Rican flag, to sing a patriotic tune, to talk of independence, and of course to fight for the liberation of the island (this law would last until 1958 when it was deemed as a violation of human rights on behalf of a government) (Torres Gonzalez 2001).

Between the time that Albizu Campos returned to the island and Puerto Rico's new Commonwealth status would be enacted, Nationalists planned an armed revolution. Uprisings occurred in numerous towns including the town of Jayuya which was held for three days. The U.S. government retaliated by declaring martial law and using Puerto Rico's own national guard to attack the nationalists. The town of Jayuya was bombed by American bombers and by land artillery. Part of the town was destroyed and the United States made sure that news of the incident would not leave Puerto Rico (it was communicated that it was an issue between Puerto Ricans); Pedro Albizu Campos would again be imprisoned. Nationalists who were in the United States at the time attempted to assassinate President Henry Truman on November 30<sup>th</sup> 1950. One of the nationalists and a secret service agent lost their life at the Blair House attack. All of these examples of nationalist struggle for Puerto Rican independence created the platform for Puerto Rican national art. In essence, the art continued this struggle through non-violent means although many paintings and prints attempted to incite revolutionary sentiment. Visual art is only one expression of many. If others were analyzed in their content to understand from a popular perspective the history of the nation, perhaps nationalism was *the* form that expressions were manifested.

The art that is considered national art or art for the preservation of the national/cultural identity, heavily documented this period and the individuals and groups

that were involved. The images that have survived and were later painted about this period are very different from forms of written documentation from the time. The actions and the existence of those involved have not and most likely will not be forgotten even though state education provides minimal information in order to keep education free of political bias. The art questions what political bias is: in Puerto Rico, it is more acceptable to not present or mention this era of struggle and individuals involved because no matter how it presented, it is biased or politically disconcerting to one state or another (or both if one sees both governments as preserving status quo). For an individual to be politically correct, a rejection of the memories established is necessary.

### **MODERNIZATION FOR PUERTO RICO**

In the 1940's the Popular Democratic Party (PPD) gained enough power in the insular government to implement various new programs on behalf of social justice. In 1946, Luis Muñoz Marín published an article titled "*Nuevos caminos hacia viejos objetivos*" where he called for new definitions for the concepts of sovereignty and freedom. He believed that neither statehood nor independence, based on their past achievements, responded effectively to hunger and social justice. His commonwealth status was designed to do exactly that: respond to hunger and social justice. Understanding North American agenda and involvement prior to this publication and establishment of the commonwealth, can hardly be seen as a challenge to American assimilation and domination. On the contrary, the people of Puerto Rico, who were supposed to replace the fatherland or the national identity, were now more dependent on their American colonizers and less directed toward being self-reliant. What Muñoz

Marín saw as a favor to the people of Puerto Rico was actually a favor for U.S. assimilation and hegemony; especially after the Nationalists had created such uproar and attempted to gain world attention.

Up until this period, the visual arts were a means for resistance against cultural aggression and imperialism. DIVEDCO (*División de Educación de la Comunidad; Division of Community Education*) was initiated in 1947 under the Public Education Department (under the direction of U.S. nationals Edwin Roskam and Fred Wales) and gave opportunities to artists that are deconstructive of the familiar “starving artist” archetype. DIVEDCO:

employed and trained artists, writers, photographers, and film technicians to elaborate educational material for the rural areas of the island...published books and pamphlets that were distributed without cost to stimulate reading... dramatized social ills and presented solutions that served as models for raising the population's standard of living" (Benítez 2004a: 142).

DIVEDCO reinforced the visual images that the United States wanted to parade since the beginnings of its occupation. Muñoz Marín wanted to increase literacy and promote education--visual art helped this as well as disseminating social values and attitudes agreed on by the insular government. The print art poster, being able to be placed in public places, produced in large quantities, and communicating to the masses, would help implement the new social order more successfully.



*Hacia Mejores Viviendas (Towards Better Housing)*  
Irene Delano, 1947; *Arte e Identidad*; 117.



*Peligro (Danger)*, Irene Delano y Francisco Palacios, 1946;  
*Arte e Identidad*; 216.

**Figure 4 Modernization:** Both posters were produced by DIVEDCO and show the paternalistic element of state propaganda for the purpose of shifting toward a more modern society. As depicted in figure 1, artists were employed by the state in order to paint what it deemed necessary.

In 1948, Operation Bootstrap began the modernization of the island as a highly ambitious project which would industrialize Puerto Rico and distance it from its previous mono-agricultural based economy. The reasoning behind the modernization project was that the overpopulated island could not sustain itself under an agrarian system. American companies and their factories arrived in Puerto Rico precisely after suppressing minimum wage increments under previous appointed governors and established free-trade. Operation Bootstrap also deregulated the investment of capital and allowed external raw materials to be imported into Puerto Rico and only finished “Made in USA” products exported. The result of the American industrialization was a new working class territory of about 3 million people. Operation Bootstrap provided industrial jobs and the

beginning of an attempt to fully modernize a nation deeply-rooted in religious and family tradition.

A significant group of artists formed an organization in order to preserve the Puerto Rican identity amidst all of the changes establishing a more American way of life. CAP (Centro de Arte Puertorriqueño), the Center for Puerto Rican Art, was opened in 1950 and their manifesto reads:

This portfolio... is the result of the collective work of a group of artists interested in developing a Puerto Rican art. They believe that by cultivating the graphic medium, the work will reach a wider audience; that, in Puerto Rico, art must come from a complete identification between the artists and the people; that only by working together, by collectively discussing their work and their problems in an effort to overcome them, will the artists give new life to Puerto Rican art" (Benítez 2004: 142).

CAP was centered around the ideals of Pedro Albizu Campos. They, like DIVEDCO, would use a new print medium that allowed them to create art in greater quantities while creating visual images accessible to the public. Artists like Miguel Pou, Carlos Raquel Rivera, Lorenzo Homar, Rafael Tufiño, José Torres Martinó, amongst others created art that was nostalgic, displayed Puerto Rico's founding fathers; were filled with indignation, rage, and paternalism. They were satirical and meant for social protest, displayed folk traditions and celebrations, extolled the slums, put on display the deplorable social conditions, and attempted to shed international light on the culture, life, and ills of colonial exploitation (Benítez 2004b).



Huracán del Norte  
(Hurricane from the  
North), Carlos Raquel  
Rivera, 1955; Artstor.



*Disparate (Nonsense)*,  
Lorenzo Homar, 1954;  
MAPR, 86.

**Figure 5 Critical Thought:** This group of paintings produced by the 1950's generation of artists shows an element of sharp and consistent critique of the colonial relationship between the United States and Puerto Rico.



*Elecciones Coloniales* (Colonial Elections), Carlos Raquel Rivera, 1959; *Arte e Identidad*, 124.

**Figure 5 Critical Thought continued**

## THE COMMONWEALTH STATUS

The radical Nationalist movement, led by Pedro Albizu Campos, and pressure from the United Nations eventually resulted in reform. In 1952 Puerto Rico was removed from the list of colonies and attained self-government under its constitution. But the commonwealth status that Congress ratified and presented to the United Nations as a solution to the colonial situation of Puerto Rico has been the source of endless debate (Benítez 1998: 74).

A resolution by the United Nations in 1950 began a decolonization process around the world and pressured the United States to renegotiate its relationship with Puerto Rico (pressure from the UN still exists today and is critical the U.S. government's treatment of Puerto Rico). Luis Muñoz Marín who formerly supported independence, worked alongside Albizu Campos before the new constitution was enacted. Muñoz Marín has been credited as being the designer of the commonwealth status and how it, unlike statehood or independence, could address the social ills—Albizu Campos would see this as a colonial farce. Puerto Rico's language of instruction would return to Spanish in 1949 and Albizu Campos would return to prison after nationalists led by Lolita Lebrón opened fire in the U.S. House of Representatives wounding five congressman in 1954.

No deaths occurred. The nationalists claimed to be interested only in gaining global media attention for the injustice in Puerto Rico.

As Puerto Rico struggled through turbulent times in the 50's, the colonial government continued to adopt policies to both assimilate into the American mainstream but also to preserve the national identity. In 1955 the *Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña* (Institute of Puerto Rican Culture), ICP, would be established and fully funded by the colonial government amidst controversy. The ICP aimed at “preservation, promotion, enrichment, and dissemination of the cultural values of the people of Puerto Rico” (Alvárez Curbelo 2004d: 114).

Operations were set in place to include the "folklorization" of the popular, the domestication of patriotic symbols and themes, and the enthronization of Occidentalism and internationalisms as paradigms. Creole and Latin American traits were undervalued as backwards where stateside lifestyles and culture were earnestly embraced as standards of progress (114).

Statehooders opposed the existence of the ICP because they wanted to assimilate into the mainstream American culture while other groups within the population feared the radicalism of the Nationalist campaign and saw the institute's overlap.

## **PUERTO RICO AND ITS ART IN THE LATE 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY**

In the late 1960's, a great amount of pressure would be mounted on Puerto Rican artists to adopt new innovative styles created in the United States, specifically out of the New York School. This conflicted with the challenge of creating a national identification through art. A group of Puerto Rican artists formed a union that was known as the “way out group.” This group of Puerto Ricans reflected the social reality of the back and forth

migration of Puerto Ricans between the island and U.S. mainland. This constant movement brought ideas back to the island that would be reflected in changes to the culture (Álvarez Curbelo 2004e).

Art schools for adults and children were formed throughout Puerto Rico. As well as teach art, the schools displayed the students' work in their own galleries and exhibitions (it has been documented that many of these new aspiring artists at the *San Juan Art Students' League* during the sixties would impact Puerto Rican art in the 1980's (Benítez 2004b)). Numerous galleries in Puerto Rico would spring up to display these new foreign styles along with symposiums at universities and exhibitions throughout the fine arts community. The same was attempted in New York to introduce the American mainstream to Puerto Rican art, but the idea would fail due to opposition from local neighborhoods. Racial prejudice was identified as a deterrent of this exchange (Benítez 2004b).

The art that was successful during the 1950's in Puerto Rico was now difficult to sell in the late sixties and seventies due to the demand of new artistic styles. A few artists such as Myrna Baez and Francisco Rodon though were highly praised in the efforts in Puerto Rican art although they were against the styles in vogue. Martha Traba, a highly regarded Argentine art critic, positively critiqued both Baez and Rodon because of their own innovative ways of presenting subjects and dilemmas while not rejecting formalism. Myrna Baez's paintings are credited by "admitting a new social order in Puerto Rico in the 60's and 70's" (Benítez 2004b: 209).



*Triptico (Retrato de America Baez)* [Triptych, Portrait of America Báez], Myrna Báez, 1972; MAPR, p. 105.

**Figure 6 The 1960's and 70's: This image represents a significant period in Puerto Rican art that display the memory of fatigue and exhaustion. Myrna Báez developed a unique style in her work that allowed her to paint a reality that reflected the emptiness of a desert that Puerto Rico became during this time.**

Beginning in the 1960's, large-scale change within Puerto Rican society began occurring. The Vietnam War caused a large amount of political dissent. Puerto Rico became a society divided. Puerto Ricans were divided on the Vietnam War and the draft, divided on the democracy of the university, and divided on whom to side with in order to obtain a more sustainable life by decreasing poverty. These cultural clashes lasted up until the 1980's. Sources of opportunity that were once reliable were now questioned and those that were previously questioned were looked at under new light. The post-Vietnam depression saw oil and food products go through an inflation of prices. The high and rising number of unemployed created a greater dependency on direct federal aid (mainly foodstamps). The need for social and medical assistance welcomed the statehood party's discourse for the poor and impoverished (Álvarez Curbelo 2004d). The statehood party

(New Progressive Party) was formed in the 1970's and quickly thereafter found themselves in control of the insular government. Changes that Puerto Ricans counted on being brought by the statehood party resulted in local aggression towards Puerto Rico's nationality. Widespread reform came in the form of "unplanned urban development... devoid of well-planned road networks, hospitals, and recreation facilities, that constituted an indiscriminant appropriation of North American urban patterns, transformed the social profile of the country, its expectations, and utopias" (Álvarez Curbelo 2004e: 262). Pro-statehooders attempted to dismantle the Institute of Culture in 1977. The new appointed director of the ICP would be Dr. Leticia de Rosario who was a professor of physics. The beginning of the culture wars in Puerto Rico was a result of the crises faced by an institute for the promotion of Puerto Rican culture that did not promote the arts and culture. Art schools such as *La Liga* (San Juan Art Students' League) organized various exhibitions and programs that would counteract the difficulties faced by the ICP.

Ideological persecution also increased during the turbulent 70's. Feminist groups, labor unions, university students, and cultural religious groups were added to the persecuted pro-independence organizations and also became targets of anti-subversive campaigns. A strengthening of the already oppressive insular police force brought more consistent policing and popular unrest (the Case of Cerro Maravilla is a good example of the strength and abuse of power synonymous with the police force; police planned and orchestrated an ambush and murder of two pro-independence individuals). The officers were later found guilty of murder among a list of charges. The incident caused a political polarization that to this day is contested.

It was not until 1984 that the Commonwealth Party gained control of the government again. Governor Rafael Hernández Colon was elected governor and immediately took actions to revive a struggling national identity. Interestingly, relations with Spain were sought after and a celebration of the language and history were enacted. In fact, Hernández Colon began a large campaign; met with great opposition, to re-establish Spanish as the official language (it was not until 1992 that it was formally the official language).

In the last 20 years, Puerto Rico has gone back and forth between ruling parties and not much has changed. Crime rates and other social issues fluctuate constantly and pro-independence campaigns are still crushed (the murder of the 72 year-old Nationalist leader Filiberto Ojeda Ríos by insular police and the FBI on the anniversary of El Grito de Lares in 2006 has been the most recent conflict). Pedro Rosselló, governor of Puerto Rico between 1992 and 1998 from the pro-statehood party, continued the American cultural aggression against the Puerto Rican identity during his tenure. Examples of this have been the meager funding of the fine arts and his denial of the word *Pueblo* (used to signify nation within Puerto Rican society) to address the popular sector (Benítez 1998). These constant changes and fluctuations in popular society have created an anxiety of chaos that is evident in Puerto Rican art (Benítez 1998).



Carlos Irizarry, *La transculturación del puertorriqueño* (The Transculturation of the Puerto Rican), 1975; MAPR, 2006, p. 121.

**Figure 7 Under Two Empires:** This image shows the 20th century trajectory of the Puerto Rican identity. Although highly critical of American cultural aggression, it brings up the memory of what Puerto Rico was after Spanish colonization and that same concept after more than a century of American colonization. According to the painter, what is left of a community is exactly what is shown.

## CUBA

Cuba and Puerto Rico are very comparable in their histories, anti-imperialism, and cultural production. They were both colonies under the Spanish Kingdom and struggled towards independence in a similar fashion. Cuba though, was sought after by the United States far before Puerto Rico was acquired. Prior to the American Civil War, attempts to purchase Cuba from Spain were numerous but debates whether the island would be incorporated as a free state or a slave state prevented negotiations from being realized.

After the Cuban revolution began in 1868, a large and powerful exile community migrated to the United States and created an interest in Cuban liberation to both the American state and public through newspaper media and the Cuban cigar business out of Tampa that as part of the packaging, included national liberation propaganda to its consumers (Destiny of Empires 1998). After the Treaty of Paris, for which Cuban officials, like Puerto Ricans, were denied attendance at the meeting, Cuba became a protectorate of the United States under the Platt Amendment of 1901. The Platt Amendment allowed the U.S. government to establish a navy base at Guantanamo Bay, allowed the U.S. government to intervene in economic affairs, prohibited Cuba from negotiating treaties with any country other than the United States, and disallowed Cuba from selling or negotiating the transfer of any Cuban land to any other country other than the United States (among many other regulations included in the amendment).

During the mid to late 1920's, as the price for sugar dropped significantly, president Gerardo Machado, an economic reformer, tried to diversify the Cuban economy in order to reduce Cuba's reliance on sugar. His goal was to decrease the dependency on the United States by creating a Cuban economy based on subsistence and less reliance on North American manufactured goods (Hugh 1998). Machado wanted to modernize with direct government investment rather than foreign. His goals were never realized as Cuba suffered from great poverty due to the Great Depression. Discontent increased rapidly and Machado's response justified him as a despot that employed death squads to meet opposition. He was finally toppled by his opposition consisting of dissident university students, labor activists, and military officers that would see General Fulgencio Batista assume power (Dur 2002; Machado y Morales 1957).

The Platt Amendment would eventually be repealed under Roosevelt's Good Neighbor Policy although the U.S. government still leases the Navy base at Guantanamo. Cuba's economic infrastructure changed rapidly after the Spanish American War due to direct investment from North American capitalists that caused changes in land ownership and resource distribution and use (Ayala 1999; Santamarina 2000).

The visual art created by Cuban artists after United States colonization follows the struggle of creating national identity as it did in Puerto Rico but it developed quite differently; to be more specific, in comparison with Puerto Rico; innovative styles from abroad were incorporated to a degree. Despite the fact that there was a degree of rejection of foreign styles, there were degrees of incorporation that are considered strongly politically involved in social change (Blanc 1996). This situation would place Cuban art in high regard.

The 1950's was the decade for immense change for both of the islands. While Puerto Rico became a commonwealth and saw numerous changes from direct American investment it also was witness to strong oppositional separatists in the Nationalist movement. They would be unsuccessful in their ultimate goal of an independent Puerto Rican nation. However with the Cuban Revolution in 1959, Cuba became an independent nation that rejected all foreign corporations and nationalized all sectors of its society. The 26<sup>th</sup> of July Movement set to destroy imperialism. By targeting imperialism, the United States was acknowledged as its catalyst. After the success of the Cuban Revolution, Che Guevara stated that "our revolution is endangering all American possessions in Latin America. We are telling these countries to make their own

revolution” (Guevara 1962). Relations with the United States have never been the same since.

Since the changes in the 1950’s, the islands of Puerto Rico and Cuba (which evolved from similar beginnings and trajectory) have diverged into ideological opposites in regards to state functions. Puerto Rico is a modern colony that claims a commonwealth status; it is globalized in that it accepts, welcomes, and over-values everything foreign while Cuba is a nationalized Communist nation that is ideologically isolated from foreign cultures and influence. Their governments can be considered in ideological opposition. However, their cultural productions have rarely been compared. We know very little about what they have produced and how they have expressed their social realities.

### III. GAPS IN LITERATURE

The most important gap that this study intends to fill is the gap of non-biased documentation of history that acknowledges the Puerto Rican perspective. Written documentation used for education in the United States is written by the United States and in this sense, it is skewed to serve North American interests. The information is outdated, oversimplified, and disregards the fact that the history of Puerto Rico is not told by Puerto Ricans and their experiences. Because this study is a post-colonial study, it provides history documented by Puerto Ricans.

Within sociology, visual art and popular expression within the context of world-systems is absent. This study will explore modern colonialism. There is extensive literature on nationalism but a gap when it comes to colonies and how they operate after 1950 (when decolonialization was initiated by the UN and most colonies became independent nations, ex. African nations). Concepts such as the “colonial mentality” have been explored outside of American sociology. Art and the museum are also theoretical concepts that have been explored in terms of how they support nationalism. However, art in places that are not yet nations or have never been, has received little attention.

My study examines art in a colonial situation and how that relates to nation building in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Art is a symbol and an earmark for creative expression and freedom of speech. The world is changing very rapidly and political statuses that once

benefitted territories have become outdated because international trade and free trade agreements are available without classical colonialism. The Puerto Rican government has been extensively documented in its inadequacies to its constituents and its benefit to the colonizer. What the state is willing to support in the visual display of its people and culture to the rest of the world is a reality that has yet to be explored and is worth exploring for better knowledge of international social systems, power, and culture. Also, how the state agenda relates to the actual art is an interesting relationship that warrants examination.

#### IV. METHODS

To gain a thorough understanding of the use of art by the state in a colonial society (in Puerto Rico), I used a triangulation of research methods. I conducted in-depth interviews of experts in the field of visual art in Puerto Rico, performed a comparative content analysis over the art produced by the nations of Puerto Rico and Cuba between 1950 and 1965, and performed field-research (ethnography) of museums in Puerto Rico and Cuba to see first hand what art is displayed and how it is displayed.

The social reality known of Puerto Rico depends on the state. Public education is a state run institution that upholds the existence of the state and the colonial situation. Puerto Rican artists' creativity is also constrained by colonialism. However, they cite degrees of freedom in cultural expression. By analyzing art I am allowed to re-interpret the history of the colonial situation from the point of view of people that have used the available degree of free-expression to reproduce the situations experienced in their lives. I believe it is a more democratic history than the use of official documents that have been created by a colonial government that will not disrupt the relationship between the government, and its colonizer.

This study examined three issues that I see as central to understanding colonialism and its expression: 1) the extent and nature of the influence of the colonizer on the art produced and displayed, 2) the message conveyed to the nation by the art, and 3) the message conveyed to the outside world by the art. By analyzing visual art, I am able to

analyze an expression that has documented the history of the nation more so than the other forms of expression because of lack of records and documentation.

## **IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS**

In depth interviews were conducted with experts in Puerto Rican visual art. These experts include museum curators, directors, art professors, collectors, artists, and independent organizers of contemporary Puerto Rican art. The set of qualitative interviews will be drawn from individuals who are easily accessible through online databases and museum contact lists and whose position requires that they provide this type of information to the public. Online databases, such as the list of individuals involved in Puerto Rican art on <http://elstatus.com/people.html>, are available specifically to be contacted by individuals wanting a better understanding of the institution and the art. I used a snowball sampling method because of the size of the population and the familiarity between the members of the group.

The interviews were unstructured so that I gained as much information as possible. My subjects for the interviews were for the most part in control over where the interviews take place and in what language we speak (Spanish or English). I am bilingual.

Prior to meeting with the subjects of my interviews, on top of the usual planning the interview through phone calls and emails, I emailed or faxed a list of questions that I drafted so that my respondents have some understanding of what I wanted to explain at the end of this study. Examples of the questions that were asked are: What are some examples of how the government is involved in visual art? How are art museums in

Puerto Rico funded? Why was DIVEDCO and the Institute of Puerto Rican Culture started? What does the ICP do today with visual art? How is the ICP a relevant institution in Puerto Rico? Transcribing was done without including pauses, repetitions, and other irregular conversational characteristics because the content of the information was needed rather than the presentation.

## **CONTENT ANALYSIS**

The content analysis quantitatively described and compared (with frequencies/proportions and bivariate statistical tests) the art produced by the nations of Cuba and Puerto Rico between the years of 1950-1965. I qualitatively analyzed and compared the art of the two nations. The overarching purpose of this content analysis was to determine the extent to which art (and the mechanisms by which art) reflects a resistance to or an assimilation of the colonizing nation. It will be measured by first classifying the art on whether it follows the changes in art and the Academy's relocation to New York. The art that followed the new forms of art defined by the New York School as Modern Art or Contemporary Art such as Abstract Expressionism was considered modernist; or assimilating to the North American changes in art. Then, the art was classified on the basis of subject matter between whether the art is anti-colonial or not. Anti-colonial in this study means any message or depiction that undermines the colonizing agenda. The colonizing agenda was understood as the desire for a foreign population to abandon its history and identity in order to conform to the hegemonic North American standard. This resistance or assimilation provided an opportunity to comment on the reaction to hegemony seen in art. Hegemony in art styles reflects an overall

hegemony; in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and today, of modernization and capitalism led by the United States. In particular, the New York School's Abstract Expressionism demonstrates American influence going global through economics and culture.

It was virtually impossible to attempt to gather every piece of art produced in those time periods and to analyze them in their original state (size, lighting, etc.) and thus a truly random sample was extremely difficult to obtain. But, the sample obtained for the years 1950 to 1965 is indeed representative. I had to depend on the literature and publications that are available from museums such as the cartel books and museum catalogs (books published that display all of the art and information that are available inside of the museums). Because the largest national museums were visited for each nation, and their catalogues obtained, the visual art is comparable. Additional resources were used in order to increase the sample size and diversity thus strengthening the reliability and validity of the statistical test. The museums have some art available via the internet also. The materials that will be used are the following:

<b>Publication Title</b>	<b>Author or Museum</b>	<b>Museum Location</b>	<b>Year</b>
<i>Contexto puertorriqueño: del rococó colonial al arte global</i>	Museo De Arte de Puerto Rico (MAPR)	San Juan, Puerto Rico	2007
<i>Memoria; Artes visuales cubanas del siglo XX</i>	Jose Veigas, et. al		2003
<i>Collección de Arte Cubano</i>	Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes	La Habana, Cuba	2001
<i>Latin American Art in the Twentieth Century</i>	David Sullivan		1996
<i>Inverted Utopias; Avant-Garde Art in Latin America</i>	Mari Carmen Ramírez and Héctor Olea		2004
<i>El cartel en Puerto Rico</i>	Teresa Tio		2003

## QUALITATIVE CONTENT ANALYSIS

The information that was collected from the analysis of the visual images will fall under the categories of “description,” “interpretation,” “impression,” and “Modernism.” The description is the literal qualities of the artwork that I identify. The description was the closest to an objective observation that exists in the study: it lists objects, colors, references, and situations painted. The “interpretation” was my interpretation of what the artist was saying and the relationship of the artwork to the time and culture in which it was created. The interpretation depends on knowledge of the situations that existed in both places at the time it was painted or some other historical moment in the history of the places. Since the art “will resonate in its own way over the whole range of human emotions and each person will be touched in a different way” (Gortais 2005: 1243), the

interpretation was from my subjective interpretation. The “impression” consisted of my subjective thoughts and feelings about the artwork. The impression was a product of what the artist is saying, why it was said, and how it was said. In the receiver of art, it is the emotion that is evoked. In this category, messages can be transferred in a variety of ways, for example brush strokes. For this study, the impression will be limited because I am not an expert on art and do not want to risk overstating concepts. The finer details that require microanalyses by trained eyes will not be accounted for. For the categories of description, interpretation, and impression, themes will be put together and discussed from the notes kept on each individual painting during the coding process.

## **QUANTITATIVE CONTENT ANALYSIS**

From the categories of description, interpretation, and impression, it was determined whether or not the piece is anti-colonial (conclusions will be placed in dichotomous/dummy variables separated by nation; 1 if it is anti-colonial and 0 if it is not). The Modernism category was for the purpose of identifying if the artist incorporated styles developed in the 20<sup>th</sup> century outside of the Cuban and Puerto Rican nations. It was either coded “yes” (1) or “no” (0) as a dummy variable. Modernism and Abstract Expressionism are the only styles that signify outside influence during this time frame and was a product of the New York School. Modernism and Abstract Expressionism can be said to be the hegemonic art form during this period. I kept a count of this category because it is the category that specifically comments on the use of outside changes in art and the ability to create innovative styles not seen before in Cuban and Puerto Rican art. This use of outside influences reflected the relationship with the

United States. All of the pieces of art that I analyzed are significant in one way or another because they have made it into the collections that I will use to analyze. No judgments or critiquing of art will be done. In other words, the visual art was analyzed to understand content rather than decide if it was successful in the manifestation of ideas and realities.

At the conclusion of the content analysis I provided qualitative themes over the meanings of the art and both nations' susceptibility to outside influences. I intended to understand the messages produced for their own masses and for the outside world. I provided quantitative data on the extent to which imperialism/colonialism was present in the art. Puerto Rico and Cuba are very similar in histories and diverged towards very different destinations beginning in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The 1950's was a time of great change for both nations. The time frame of this content analysis allowed me to analyze the nations' art before, during, and after their political changes. I intended to gain an understanding of popular life and criticism of social realities under both states and political systems. Their differences were attributed, by myself, to the creation of the commonwealth status and the Cuban Revolution of 1959 where the societies' paths moved in opposition. These differences and the art that came out of these social realities better explain the existence and definition of the colony and colonial relations in the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century on into the 21<sup>st</sup>.

## **ETHNOGRAPHY**

During the course of this study, I visited the museums in Puerto Rico and Cuba to see how the visual art was presented. In Puerto Rico there are different museums based

on the different degrees of government funding and the art that it presents in their space.

In Cuba, all museums are completely funded by the state. I will analyze the museums based on the following criteria:

1. How is the art in the museum organized/classified?
2. How is the art presented?
3. What is written for the public to read?
  - a. By whom?
4. How is it written for the public?
5. What is the public supposed to understand by the presentation throughout the museum?
6. How does the art presented vary in relation to the degree of government funding?

I kept a journal of the museum experiences where I asked myself basic political sociology questions such as; who is in power? How did they achieve power? And, how is power manifested with art produced/displayed? I updated the journal during the visit to the museum and when the opportunities for conversations arose within the museum visit, the journal was updated directly after the visit and at the most before the next museum visit.

## V. RESULTS

### IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS

The respondents who were available for these interviews were seven females and one male. Their pseudonyms are Mariana, Fernanda, Joanne, Michaela, Stephanie, Vanessa, Stacey and Juan. They were all employed as professionals in the field of art working in the institutions of art on the island of Puerto Rico. One, Michaela, was interviewed stateside.

In all of the interviews, I asked (in one form or other) what needs to be known in order to understand Puerto Rican art. In all the interviews, it was recommended that I read Dr. Pedro Albizu Campos' *La conciencia nacional puertorriqueña*. The purpose was for me to understand the mindset of Puerto Rican artists painting the cause of resistance to American assimilation. Most of the Puerto Rican artists covered in this project were nationalists. Artists of other causes that also tended to use other forms of painting are considered marginalized because of Puerto Rico's nationalist art establishment and activism. The following findings were the most relevant and important themes that were present in all of the interviews.

### ISOLATION

Puerto Rico's isolation is somewhat comparable to Cuba's situation under the U.S. led Economic Embargo. Both realities maintain the nations in an obscurity from the

North American masses as to mislead and create a misconception about their government's actions, agendas, and application of its imperialist ideology. For Puerto Rico, its in-between status conveniently keeps its culture of resistance in obscurity from the global public as well as the American public. When I asked what difficulties existed for Puerto Rican artists accessing the international community, Mariana answered:

*Bueno, al ser colonia, Puerto Rico no tiene consulados fuera; nada. Una de las responsabilidades de las embajadas es precisamente como/para mover tu arte. Los deberes son, tu promover tu arte, tus cosas, afuera de tu país. Y Puerto Rico no tiene embajada. Imagínate, nosotros no podemos pertenecer a la OEA. ¿Por que? Porque no somos independiente. Entonces, ahí mismo, te limitas porque la OEA da un montón de becas a estudiantes en Latinoamérica; Puertorriqueños no podemos coger porque somos de los estados unidos; somos una colonia.* [Well, by being a colony, Puerto Rico does not have consulates outside; nothing. One of the responsibilities of an embassy is precisely to transport art. The reason is for you to promote your art, your things, outside of your country. And Puerto Rico does not have an embassy. Imagine, we are not able to belong to the OEA (Organization of American States) Why? Because we are not independent. In this instance, you are limited because the OEA gives away a lot of scholarships to students in Latin America; Puerto Ricans cannot obtain any because we belong to the United States; we are a colony.]

Fernanda answered the same question by saying:

*Si tú no tienes las embajadas y tus consulados, en realidad no vas a ser representado. En cambio, aquí se ha producido muchísimo, en algunas regiones mucho más. Hay muchos artistas haciendo muchas cosas pero no se sabe. Porque no hay un vehículo que permita que se sepa.* [If you don't have an embassy with your consulates, in reality, you are not going to be represented... there's a lot of artists doing a lot of things but it remains unknown; because you don't have a vehicle that allows it to be known.]

These organizations that my respondents mention are organized for sovereign nations with certain political institutions that deal directly with the exportation of culture. Again, Puerto Rico is supposed to benefit from the best of both worlds by its free association; but, it is actually limited from the full functions of a sovereign nation and a U.S. state.

Puerto Rico is not internationally represented outside of international pageants and sporting competitions—these events might satisfy many, but it does not suffice for many others interested in international relations. In an ideal, non-bureaucratic world, the United States’ embassy would accommodate its territories in order for them to be in control of their own culture. But that also does not happen.

The existence of an embassy is something only available to nation-states. If both the U.S. Government and the Colonial government of Puerto Rico valued cultural exportation, some type of entity could have been created in order to provide this vital service to both receptors and producers of culture. Although Cuba is constrained by the U.S. blockade or economic embargo, seemingly it would suffer this same consequence by not being able to maintain an embassy in the United States and thus not be able to export its culture, but this is not the case. Cuba is granted a “Special Interests Section” in Washington D.C. that acts as an embassy. Is Puerto Rico’s non-existent embassy by design or just an unintended reality of its subordination to the United States?

Puerto Rico cannot participate in unions such as the OEA (Organization of American States) by their own sovereign institution, one would imagine it would be able to appear under that of the United States, but that is not the truth. Mariana explained to me that:

*Nunca ha habido una invitación de ninguna embajada Norteamérica. Para nada. Nosotros no tenemos consulados en ningún embajada. Cuba sí. Países que tienen embajadores, parte de su proyecto, además de lo económico, a siempre viene la cosa cultural que demuestre el pueblo sólido.* [There’s never been an invitation from any North American embassy. But whatever. We do not have any consulates in any embassy. Cuba does. Countries that have ambassadors, who are part of their project, beyond what is economic, culture is always something that demonstrates the solidarity of a country.]

By now, a better picture of how the colonial relationship hinders opportunities in general can begin to be understood by an individual attempting to comprehend the purpose of colonialism. I do not think I am overstating this reality when I say that the purpose definitely is not to develop the Puerto Rican identity and nation into a self-sufficient entity that promotes opportunities to its population.

So how has the Puerto Rican identity survived this far and why is it distinguishably noticeable? Well, this study shows that it has come from the popular sector and its interest and investment into the community. Many Puerto Ricans feel a great duty to do their part for the survival of their nation. Vanessa also explained to me that many young artists today, as well as many in the past, have traveled around the island starting drives for donations from the popular sector. Mariana explained to me how, historically, Puerto Ricans have innovated in order to enjoy the same opportunities and create art institutions present in countries throughout the Americas. She revisited:

*...después fue la segunda guerra mundial, después vienen fondos para los veteranos; con los fondos de los veteranos sé que se empezó la Academia Nacoli en Santurce. Pues quienes atendían? Los veteranos de guerra... esos fondos, que le daba el gobierno, para que se abrieran esas escuelas, y educaran los veteranos. Y con los fondos de veteranos, si vienes a ver, quienes estudio con los fondos de veteranos, Rafael Tufiño, Carlos Raquel Rivera, Luis Rodríguez Báez, Lorenzo Homar,.. o sea, You name it. Todos estudiaron con fondos veteranos porque todos eran veteranos. El mismo Lorenzo Homar, para ese tiempo, vivía en Nueva York y en el 51 vino para acá. Y Homar, después que volvió de la guerra también estudia en las escuelas de arte en Nueva York. Llegan esos fondos indirectamente y mira la ironía de la vida: todos los artistas que eran independentistas tienen que estudiar con fondos Americanos porque todos fueron veteranos del ejercito del colonizador. [After WWII, here comes the funds for veterans; the Academia Nacoli in Santurce was started with the veteran's funds. Well who do they serve? The veterans of war... those funds are what is used to open those schools and to educate the veterans. And if you notice who studied under those schools and that funding it was Rafael Tufiño, Carlos Raquel Rivera, Luis Rodríguez Baez, Lorenzo Homar... you name it. Those funds are received indirectly and look at*

life's irony: all of the artists who were pro-independence have to study with American funds because all of them were veterans in the colonizer's military.]

There has been a large population of Puerto Ricans serving in the U.S. military. Thus because military services are probably the biggest and most consistent employer to Puerto Ricans. Military service has been there since the arrival of the United States and its pay is much higher than the median income available in other industries within Puerto Rico. Its retirement benefits and access to American goods at more affordable prices is also another encouraging reality to many Puerto Ricans. The idea to use those funds to maintain Puerto Rico's national identity is ironic yet very clever and admirable. It has been creative efforts like these that have maintained this resistance for over 100 years. The effort has not come from the colonial government.

## **DEPENDENCY**

Historically, under the United States and previously under the Kingdom of Spain, Puerto Rico has been dominated by empires that have limited the realities of the population to the opportunities that are made available to them versus those that they can create for themselves. Puerto Rico is not and has not been self-sufficient because it has been conditioned to be dependent on its colonizers for its own well-being and existence. The artists of Puerto Rico challenged this reality throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century by not following the changes in art when visual art began to be defined by the United States and the New York School. Visual art became democratic for Puerto Ricans and allowed them to reproduce realities and be critical of the situations imposed on their nation. Visual art in essence became a vehicle to challenge the status quo and resist changes that were decided upon by outside forces. The majority of what has been documented about Puerto

Rico has also been written by those who oppress. When I asked Juan the purpose of a project to document Puerto Rican art and the history behind it (plus make it available in various different languages), he responded by saying:

*No dejar a los opresores definir lo social de esta isla. No puedan tener poder sobre el hablar, baile, lo que comes, como tú te curas; para ellos todo es mal, todo es falso. Tendrías que cambiar estas pólizas que afectan al autoestima de la gente... todas las instituciones tienen que reformar; lo educativo, lo político, lo económico. Yo veo a puertorriqueños como niños muy maduros. Y como que no pueden bregar con libertades. Por ejemplo uno de las experiencias que tuvimos en el pulguero: nosotros alquilamos el espacio y el concepto es que tú vienes presentas y vende lo que tú quieras con el precio que tú dices. Esperamos que la gente piense de maneras de presentar que fueran innovadoras y simbólicas. Por lo menos que sean creativos. Y venían en y decían " mira, porque tú no designa los lugares? Porque no propones unas marcas en el piso con tape?... " no no no, pero eso va a causar un caos. Nosotros no podemos bregar con eso." La diferencia con artistas de Puerto Rico; quizás nunca lo han hecho pero muchas veces me dijeron lo mismo. "No podemos bregar con la libertad." [You cannot let the oppressors define the social reality on this island. They cannot have power over the language, the dance, what you eat, how you cure yourself; everything is wrong in their eyes. You would have to change these policies that affect the self-esteem of the people... all of the institutions have to reform; the education, political, and economic. I see Puerto Ricans like very mature children. And its like they can't deal with freedoms. For example, one of the experiences that we had was when we put together the swap-meet. We rented the space and the concept was that you come and present and sell whatever you want at the price that you want. We hope that people think of ways to present their craft in ways that innovative and symbolic. At least that they be creative. And they would come and say "hey look, why don't you designate the areas?" "Why don't you propose spaces with tape on the ground?" "No no no, that's going to cause chaos." "We can't deal with that." The difference with artists from Puerto Rico; maybe because they haven't done it before, but they have said this to me many times. "We cannot deal with freedom."]*

The constant subordination and dependency has manifested consequences that prevent humans from reaching potentials that are available when a greater degree of free expression exists. This situation that Juan describes of Puerto Ricans not being able to deal with freedoms is related to the fact that they have historically depended on their colonizers to provide the opportunities or set the boundaries of their lives.

*The Puerto Rican Syndrome* (based on the actual syndrome that goes by that name) by Argentine psychoanalyst Patricia Gherovici is a Freudian/Lacanian psychoanalysis that was carried out on Puerto Rican soldiers of the Korean War. The soldiers exhibited numerous unusual behaviors of anxiety and issues of self-esteem. Not enough research has been done on the effects of colonialism on the people's self-esteem and anxiety levels, especially on the island of Puerto Rico. In my interview with Michaela, who was very knowledgeable of Gherovici's study and numerous other examples of psychological issues seen in Puerto Rican society, she saw that issues of a colonial mentality deeply affects the behavior as well as the skewed view of opportunities of members of the artistic/expressive community. A colonial government has very few mechanisms in their control to transport the Puerto Rican expression outside of its borders. A dependency exists for being able to express oneself that as a consequence limits how an individual sees themselves relative to the rest of the world. When Joanne and I touched on this topic of promoting culture within Puerto Rico and why there is evidence that shows stagnation, she responded:

*Hay un porque. Hay un porque no ha sido fundado de tal manera. y porque en las escuelas no se enseñan tampoco lo exitoso que es el pueblo. No se decía que realmente se enseñen a los niños cosas que les pueden ayudar con el orgullo de ser puertorriqueño.* [There's a reason why. There's a reason why it (art) hasn't been funded in such a way. And a reason why they don't teach how successful the country is in public schools. You can say, literally, they don't teach our children things that can help them in their pride of being Puerto Rican.]

National pride is necessary for nation-building. Unless the masses imagine themselves as a separate and sovereign nation, then they simply are not. According to Albizu Campos (1974), a dismantling and devaluing of the Puerto Rican identity was always an end that was intended since the North American invasion in 1898. If outside North American

culture could attain a higher value than that of Puerto Rico, within Puerto Rico, the nation would eventually imagine itself as striving to become part of a superior culture.

So where are Puerto Rican artists reaching to for opportunities? I quickly learned via my interviews that much opportunity and change does not come from within the territory of Puerto Rico and its state. Artists in Puerto Rico have to compete against artists in the United States, because the funding comes from the federal government. Puerto Rico does not have any foundations like the United States does. When I asked what resources were being sought after, Vanessa explained to me:

I think our best resource where we are sort of focusing our energies is grant opportunities in the United States. And we're doing some heavy lobbying with our lobbyists; Puerto Rico's representatives in Washington DC to see if he can put a line-item in a budget or money for the museum. I think we have some good experience recently with grants; with the NEA, NEH, IMLS; and so we want to continue following up on that.

The opportunities are there, but the problem is that the Puerto Rican artists have to compete against mainland artists for these grants and paint by the New York School's standard. Although Puerto Rico had its own school during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it still depended on North American opportunities. In order to survive as the 20<sup>th</sup> century came to a close, artists sold themselves in order to survive and continue a cultural resistance.

Visual art is one of the few expressions from the nation of Puerto Rico that has documented the past. The art tells a very different story from that of officialdom in both the mainland United States and in Puerto Rico. This will be explored more in depth in the content analysis findings. One expression that was noted as being more marginalized than art in Puerto Rico is writing. Things change in Puerto Rico and they change in ways that are described as chaotic, unorganized, and planning is not well thought out. The

dependency that exists in Puerto Rico on its colonizers has a lot to do with the reality that neither money nor resources are set aside for the future. Because popular expression is marginalized in Puerto Rico, its population has not been able to rely on these democratic means for their power in changing the status quo. The marginalization of Puerto Rican expression reinforces the belief that Puerto Rico is a modern-day slave society. Albizu Campos described Puerto Rico as a factory. A factory, like peripheral and semi-peripheral nations, receives maintenance when it is needed to preserve the factory system. This maintenance is visible in various ways; from both governments. Stacey, when talking about her experiences in Puerto Rico and in her work, explained:

So one project is like seventy-five percent done or fifty percent done; and it's like "great!" And then what? It's like, things need some TLC and then there's no money for that. And then no one wants to put any money towards it. It's like: "that was so and so's project" and then the next person is looking for the next project to use to make their name, you know; rather than taking care of something that's already been started. I think there's a lot of always starting and; something new, something new, and in a museum it is so important, you know, kind of this idea of having things in place so that things can continue for forever; right? ... People think it's one show after another; it is one show after the next but you do have to think, how are we documenting those shows? How are we documenting the collection so that this information is easily accessible to future generations? And it's not... it's like you erase the hard-drive and poof it's over and someone else comes in and has to start from scratch.

This continual beginning is disastrous for a nation that has been struggling to be realized for over 500 years. It is because of this separation from a broader view of history that this continuous stagnation exists; stagnation is not visible unless it can be seen aggregately. Every time a new regime begins to govern, the slate is wiped clean and replaced with a false sense of beginning. The art connects these various moments and

time periods that demonstrate the lack of progress since the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. Puerto Rico has benefitted from technological advancements but has replaced many local technologies as a consequence of this. The island has urbanized into a hybrid *gemeinschaft/gessellschaft* society both adopting modern living while preserving tradition, identity, and the primary group structure. But, throughout this progression, the purpose has remained the same; to further the progress and well being of core nations, as in a world-systems perspective, at its own expense. It hardly matters whether both states are working together to reap the same benefits. The truth is that the reality of both existing states has disempowered local expression and has created a society where members of the masses, as long as they continue to play by the rules, will maintain a lack of power and control over their own realities and existence.

Stephanie was well aware of the lack of planning and documentation that has occurred in the last 100 years. This lack of documentation has led to a false sense of history and manageability by the United States that exists without an organized and un-stigmatized opposition. It has been documented for Hawaii that the oral history was not a strong enough weapon to resist American assimilation. As time passed and the native language became extinct, history changed—it was no longer in the hands of the people but in the hands of their Western colonizers (Trask 1993). For Puerto Rico, enough was written and painted during Spain's colonial period to resist initial U.S. conquest. Although the official language and the language of instruction became English for the majority of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, resistance from the institution of art as well as nationalist struggles maintained the Spanish language as stronghold of the little history that was

kept. In art, like history, little is known of Puerto Rico outside of Puerto Rico. When I asked Fernanda about the dangers of lacking of documentation, she responded:

*Cuando abro los libros, hablan de los carteles americanos y los cubanos y los puertorriqueños no los conocen. No los conocen porque no han escrito sobre ellos. Necesitamos gente que nos estudie y nos promueva. Porque no hay nadie que lo haga. Y nosotros, en Puerto Rico, adonde hay una porción de gente tan grande que se quiere asimilar, tu no vas a estudiar todo estos grupos, estudiando tantas cosas en EEUU. Necesitamos muchos investigadores, y no tenemos.* [When I open the books, they talk about the American and Cuban cartels and the Puerto Ricans; they're unknown. Because they haven't been written about. We need people who will study us and promote us. There is no one who will do it. And because we are in Puerto Rico, and there is a large population that wants to assimilate, you're not going to study these groups when there are so many groups to study in the United States. We need a lot of researchers and we don't have them.]

Stephanie explained to me the details of a massive project that is going on right now that is documenting not only Puerto Rican history, expressions, and memories; but also those of the rest of Latin America. She said:

*Todo los documentos que tenemos lo vamos a traducir a inglés; y es para los investigadores que no hablan español puedan también integrar el arte latinoamericano y darle mayor exposición; porque hasta este momento no se incluye en el arte contemporáneo en los libros y en general. Y es por que hay desconocimiento de adonde es que están los documentos y no entienden el idioma. Es un proyectaso! Y lo interesante es que incluyeron a Puerto Rico. Claro, porque Mari Carmen es puertorriqueña y ella es la directora.* [All of the documents we have are going to be translated to English. And that is for the researchers that do not speak Spanish so that they can also integrate the art and give it more exposure.. and it is because there is an overall lack of knowledge of what exists and the language.]

The project has the intentions of balancing power by making available the resources that the colonial government has little interest in promoting and supplying. Again, this goes back to groups and individuals making up for the lack of opportunities provided by either

state. It is attempting to establish a self-sufficient popular sector that relies very little on its state. They have become normalized to this reality.

## **ORIENTALISM**

Puerto Rico still exists as a separate nation. It has already been over a hundred years that it has been colonized by the United States (after being colonized by Spain for over 400 years). Puerto Rico can be said to have endured the most difficult of challenges already. It is still an in-between place, speaks its own language, and is distinguishable in all other cultural aspects. In 2009, democratic mediums of outreach exist and more and more Puerto Ricans are accessing them. By these medians, I specifically mean the internet; wikis and blogs and exchanges with populations never before reached by the popular masses. As for art, efforts to display Puerto Rican art across the world are aided by one of the largest Diasporas by any nation in the world. Stacey, a curator has noticed the positive effects of globalization on access to the outside world that brings attention to the nation:

Stacey: In terms of the arts in general in Puerto Rico, I think it's one of the strongest things that Puerto Rico has going for it in terms of a really positive face in the international community. Art is one of the really great things here in Puerto Rico, in my opinion. But I mean, for instance... (a specific painting and artist) was front-page of the *London Financial Times*; it's news, right? The country couldn't buy that kind of publicity; and it's because there's a painting in a museum; and you know, that is much beloved in London just as it is here.... actually I see how the arts are working to be this ambassador for Puerto Rico in other countries.

These new medians and realities are quickly surpassing obstacles in place because of its colonial reality. In today's world, communications technology is filling the gap of

absence left by a non-existent embassy. This concept of purposeful obscurity is being challenged by technological innovations. Puerto Ricans are innovating and using irregular means to achieve the same ends that other nations achieve. To contrast this with Cuba, Cuba is rich in international representation yet the masses are just now beginning to have access to the global community. I say this because the technology that has been available in Puerto Rico has recently begun to be introduced to the Cuban populace. But, Cubans are innovating and finding ways to see the world outside of their island and also transport their experiences to the outside world.

As for the Institute of Puerto Rican Culture, I was originally misled by documentation that shows that the institute is an organization that was started under the new commonwealth government in 1955. Why it was established was a curiosity of mine. Its existence is a contradiction within the colonial nation state. The institute is fundamentally an organization that is run by a subordinate state operating under the interests of the colonizer yet it displays the resistance to that colonizer. This resistance was the documentation and the preservation of a sovereign national identity. Michaela finally explained this situation where it made some sense to me. It was again, a desire and a struggle that came from an individual not associated with either state:

*Michaela: En la década de los 50, se crea el Centro de Arte Puertorriqueño (CAP), después en 55 se crea el Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña (ICP); para entender eso tendrías que entrevistar a Ramón. Ramón te puede decir como el partido Popular no quería crear el instituto. Y eso fue cuando Ramón dio la batalla, le dieron los fondos, lo creo, pero ellos no querían el instituto!* [In the 50's, the Centro de Arte Puertorriqueño (CAP) is started, and then in 55 the Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña (ICP) is created... Ramon can tell you how he put up quite a fight because the new Commonwealth Party in power did not want the institute. But eventually he got the funds and created the institute, but they did not want it!]

The functions of the art and of the institute still exist today although there has been much resistance. In 1977, when the statehood party first arrived in power, the new appointed director of the ICP was someone with no experience in art. The party understood that it could not deconstruct the institute because of heavy resistance to its abolishment. So they appointed a professor of physics (Benítez 1998). This period for the ICP was turbulent and counter-productive (Delgado 2004). Beginning in 2009, new challenges may be in store for the ICP because the latest elected governor is again from the statehood party. When I asked Stacey what the ICP is and what kind of functions does the ICP serve today (July 2008), she responded:

ICP is strictly government.... And they also receive proposals from artists, for exhibitions. And they also present shows and produce really nice brochures and then they also give out grants to artists. Puerto Ricans that are having shows outside of Puerto Rico; someone maybe need travel money. So they do a great service and have an amazing collection too. They are very closely tied with the government; very closely tied with the government.

This is where this study diverges and, in my opinion, becomes confusing. According to Anderson (2005), museums create ancestral legitimacy. It is essential in nation-building. So why does Puerto Rico, an in-between place interlocked between sovereignty and statehood, fund and display national art that is anti-hegemonic to its colonizers? The answer is global tourism; orientalism. In today's world, free-trade is available not only with states, territories, colonies, etc., but with other nation states. Colonialism is truly outdated and extinct to current global economic relations where national borders do not represent what they used to. Puerto Rico's tourism industry, similar to Caribbean/tropical/underdeveloped nations more abundant in the southern hemisphere; is its leading money-maker. So the United States government and corporations reap these

rewards. Joanne explained how this works. First, she explained what the colonial government of Puerto Rico supports and what visitors they attract. She said:

*Si ves lo que la compañía de turismo mercadea es la playa, el campo de golf, hablan crucero, Le Lo Lay festival, festival de bomba y plena, artesanías... La gente de crucero no le importa a donde lleguen. Ellos no van a comprometerse con Puerto Rico en ningún punto de sus vidas. Y pasan por aquí cómo pasan por cualquier otro pueblo. Le da igual.* [If you see what tourism company markets it is the beach, the golf course, they talk cruises, Le Lo Lay festival, Bomba y Plena, folk-art... The people from cruise ships don't care where they make it to. They are not going to commit themselves to Puerto Rico at no point in their lives. And they pass through here like they pass through any other place. It's the same to them.]

An alternative to what is already established promotes an awareness of Puerto Rico's current situation which is not decontextualized from colonialism. Joanne continued by saying:

(on a well planned contemporary art festival) *Atraería una clientela sumamente interesante. Sería bueno para el comercio, bueno para el turismo, para el arte, y creo que sería un público mucho más interesante; y económicamente mucho más interesante para Puerto Rico en vez del típico turista norteamericano que se baja de un crucero, se va al Yunque a tomar unas fotos, a tomarse una piña colada y después compra una pieza de oro en una tienda en el Viejo San Juan y un par de suvenires y se compra una hamburguesa de Burger King y toma su café en Starbucks. Eso no sirve nada. La economía de Puerto Rico no puede ser que dependa de eso.* [It would attract an extremely interesting clientele. It would be good for commerce, good for tourism, for the art, and I think it would be a much more interesting audience; and economically much more interesting for Puerto Rico instead of the typical North American tourist that disembarks from a cruise, goes to El Yunque to take some pictures, drink a piña colada and later buys a piece of gold in Old San Juan and a pair of souvenirs, and buys a hamburger at Burger King, and then a coffee at Starbucks. This is not worth anything. Puerto Rico's economy cannot depend on this.]

The United States benefits from a decontextualization. In essence, orientalism is an oversimplification that molds the context of Puerto Rico into a reality that is catered to the pleasure seeking North American citizen. This citizen is only interested in what is on the surface. If an individual is interested in going beyond this surface, then Puerto Rico

must be understood. To understand Puerto Rico as a visitor, one cannot depend on a North American business infrastructure which is allied with the colonial state. Joanne clarified that there is a difference between the popular expressions of the past and those of the present.

*Joanne: Una feria de artesanía, sea nacional, recibe todo el apoyo necesario que puede del estado; la compañía de turismo auspicia. Tú tratas de hacer eso con arte contemporáneo, o con música experimental; olvídate. No hay apoyo. Por que todavía no hay una representación de quien somos hoy en el siglo 21... [A folk-art festival, if its national, receives all the necessary support from the state; the tourism company funds it. If you try and do that with contemporary art, or with experimental music; forget it. There's no support. It's because there still isn't a representation of who we are in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.]*

The expressions of the present are not as valued as those in the past. Those of the past are more profitable for those involved in its promotion. Contemporary art has a power to unify while national art, because it is comparative art and folk-lore, maintains status quo and status quo is more profitable for the culture industry.

The Le Lo Lay Festival, Bomba y Plena Festival, and local artisans all express national folklore that is attractive to tourism because it is comparative folklore (Anderson 2006). An individual will find the equivalent to these realities in every orientalized/tourist trap. But for Puerto Rico, the United States reaps large profits because their products are for sale there alongside that of local artisans, painters, musicians, and opportunists.

Art that has been in response to cultural aggression and has been critical of colonialism by the United States has also documented the birth and struggles of a nation. The museums that present this generic reality exist in most countries and play an important role in global tourism. It acts as a visual history lesson that has been created by the very people of the nation. In today's global tourism industry that represents a new

and significant sector of global capitalism, Puerto Rican art has found a market. It is being used by its own government as well as North American corporations to distinguish the nation from others in order to attract tourists to deposit money into its mini-system. The art that attacked the system is now being used and presented by the same system it so valiantly fought against.

## QUANTITATIVE CONTENT ANALYSIS

The quantitative content analysis provides a view of how Cuba and Puerto Rico either resisted or accepted foreign realities; specifically forms of expressions from the same empires they were once colonized by. For Puerto Rico, it shows how much the nation has assimilated to the nation that it is still colonized by. The difference in Puerto Rico and Cuba in Modernism and anti-colonialism is tested using Chi-square analyses.

## RESISTANCE OR ASSIMILATION

### CHI-SQUARE ANALYSIS

**Table 1: Chi-square difference between Puerto Rico and Cuba and use of Modernism**

<b>Modernism</b>	<b>Puerto Rico (1)</b>	<b>Cuba (2)</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Chi Square Significance</b>	<b>Pearson Correlation</b>
<b>No (0)</b>	<b>57 (64%)</b>	<b>3 (4%)</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>.000</b>	<b>.624</b>
<b>Yes (1)</b>	<b>32 (36%)</b>	<b>74 (96%)</b>	<b>106</b>		
<b>Total (N)</b>	<b>89 (100%)</b>	<b>77 (100%)</b>	<b>166</b>		

This Chi Square table shows that there is a strong association in modernist art with the nation of Cuba. The vast majority of art found and analyzed for the nation of Cuba was painted in styles developed by the New York School in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. These styles were adopted in order to paint the Cuban reality and for artists to express themselves through official mediums. Conversely, only 36% of Puerto Rican art used modernist styles developed in the United States between 1950 and 1965. If it was not for the Puerto Rican poster, graphic art (a modernist median), only a minute fraction of Puerto Rican art would have been deemed modernist.

## ANTI-COLONIALISM

**Table 2: Chi-square of differences between Puerto Rico and Cuba in anti-colonial messages**

<b>Anti-Colonial</b>	<b>Puerto Rico (1)</b>	<b>Cuba (2)</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Chi-Square Significance</b>	<b>Pearson Correlation</b>
<b>No</b>	<b>26 (30%)</b>	<b>45 (57%)</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>.000</b>	<b>-.279</b>
<b>Yes</b>	<b>62 (70%)</b>	<b>33 (43%)</b>	<b>95</b>		
<b>Total (N)</b>	<b>88 (100%)</b>	<b>77 (100%)</b>	<b>166</b>		

This Chi-Square analysis shows a much greater percentage of anti-colonial messages for the nation of Puerto Rico. This relationship is very strong and significant at the .000 level. Between 1950 and 1965, Puerto Rico was more likely to use art to express anti-colonial sentiments. During this period, Cuba's artists separated themselves from anti-colonial messages. They had successfully rid themselves of American

interference in economics and government. Their energies were focused on new issues that will be discussed below.

These two findings suggest that Puerto Rican art is more interested in resisting imperialism than assimilating to it. These analyses show this in overwhelming numbers. Artists in Puerto Rico painted many images that pointed out colonial injustice, were identity seeking (seeking a far different community identity than what was being implemented by the United States), and sought to incite anti-colonial sentiments in the Puerto Rican population. An overall critical consciousness of its colonial situation is a result of the art analyzed over the years between 1950 and 1965.

Operation Bootstrap, that began in 1948, and the establishment of the Commonwealth by ratifying the Puerto Rican Constitution in 1952 are two very important events that strengthened the United State's already dominant relationship over the island nation. If the art were to follow this pattern, Puerto Rican artists would have painted in modernist styles to support U.S. led changes on the island. Incorporating modernist styles during this time period would have shown support by the popular sector to the U.S. business/modernization agenda.

Modernist styles also show the concept of art for art's sake. It is more of an individual reinforced free-expression. Cuba, a nation known for its strong tight-knit and solid nation actually incorporated this style as contemporary art at the time. This was the way to paint for Cuban artists. These forms, although U.S. led by the New York Academy, were incorporated into Cuban art. It is not that there is not a critical element in their work, there is, but the strong majority of it is not directed at U.S. imperialism.

Artists were painting art. They could do this because they also had the other forms of expression such as literature that were also being critical. This was not the case for Puerto Rico as art was its predominant vehicle for critical and anti-colonial expression.

What is significant about these findings that speak directly to colonialism and the obscurity that Puerto Rico has found itself in under this political status is that the combination of what was expressed and how it was expressed allowed justification for its unpopularity that in turn prevented the art and the message from being seen beyond its territory. The message was critical. The messages and displays had potential consequences for the United States because of its inhumane treatment of a group of people. This is the anti-colonial message. Artists in Puerto Rico painted images that could be communicated to their people but could not be exported in the art world because it was painted in forms that were unaccepted. Both of these realities prevented the history of Puerto Rico from being documented by the nation itself. Colonialism allows the colonizer to create and define the reality. Cuba on the other hand, by using forms accepted in the art world, was able to export their art worldwide and become internationally recognized for its high quality of art. But, some of that credit has to be given to the larger (compared to Puerto Rico) Cuban aristocracy that by being outside of Cuba, was able to promote and support the Cuban expression and give it a strong market value.

## **QUALITATIVE CONTENT ANALYSIS**

In the qualitative portion of the content analysis I identified themes in the paintings based upon the thoughts and emotions provoked by the paintings. These

thoughts and emotions are the interpretations of what the artists were trying to communicate and the connections that the individual receptor achieves by connecting the context of the time period, the artist's experience, and the message conveyed by the artist through the visual image. These situations have deeper implications that demonstrate popular interests that oppose state interests. In other words, these results show some of the desires of the people in contrast to what is desired for them by the powers that be. They show what the people were interested in while the states had their own interests of how to use these people.

### **SOLIDARITY AND ISOLATION**

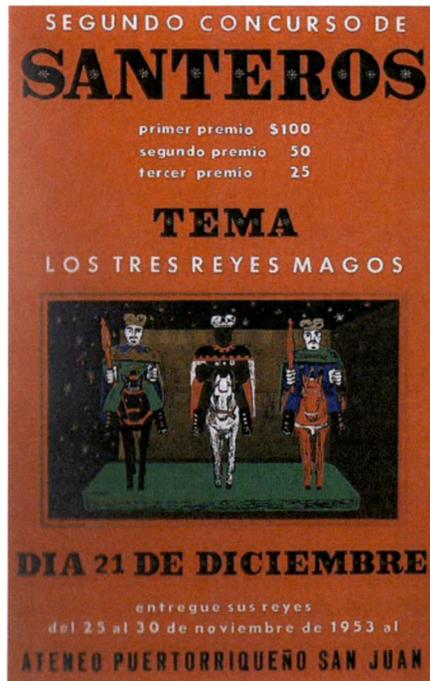
The theme of solidarity was especially evident in Puerto Rican artists' production of posters for the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. This poster median was print/graphic art that was very easy to mass produce and display in public places. The Cuban poster began to be produced in the mid-1960's and is recognized as being of high quality (Cushing 2003) and used for propaganda purposes internally in Cuba and to promote international solidarity with nations taking part in anti-colonial movements.



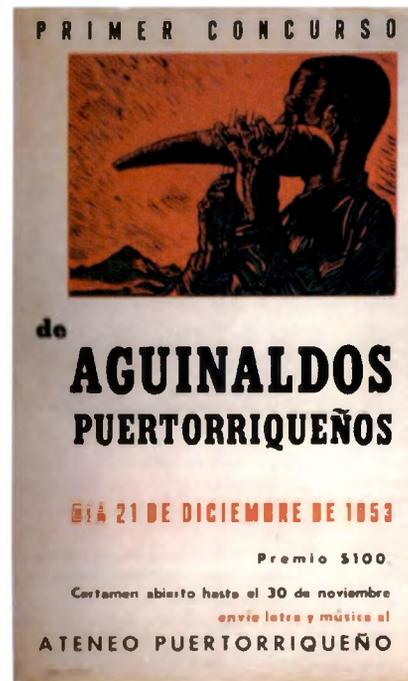
**Figure 8 International Solidarity:** Both of these images were produced by Cuban artists promoting international solidarity with other nations and the anti-colonial cause. On the left you have the Puerto Rican flag with the suggestive images of people up in arms. On the Right you have the South American continent with the image of Che Guevara in the heart of it and in red suggesting revolution.

The Puerto Rican poster was not able to be seen outside of Puerto Rico. Artists could not seek external aid from other entities. The next best option became educating the public, which was DIVEDCO's role; but these same artists that promoted community education chosen by the ruling classes also promoted Puerto Rican culture. Already existing festivals, traditions, and exhibitions were now being advertised by Puerto Rican artists (a large portion of these advertisements were produced by Lorenzo Homar and Rafael Tufiño). This not only led to increased participation and awareness of such festivals but also opened doors for new contests, festivals, movies that were advertised with posters painted by these artists, exhibitions, and gatherings that were not previously taking place. Those who organized these events could depend on the artists and DIVEDCO to spread the word. The results were successful events for traditional music festivals, folkloric

craft, and traditional Christmas posters with the Three Kings instead of Santa Claus, for example. The following are some of those posters:



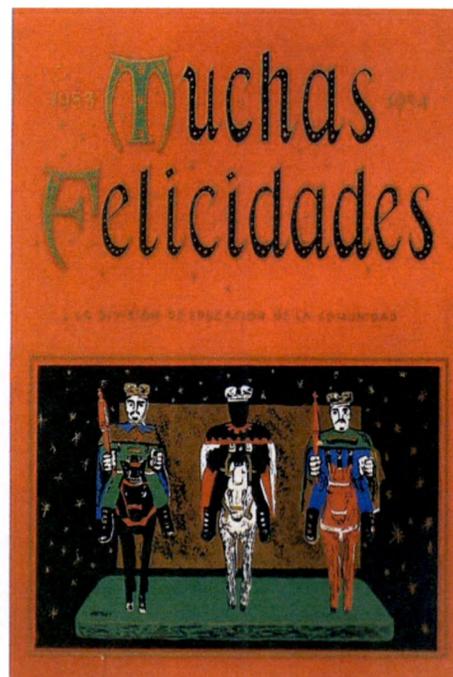
*Segundo concurso de santeros, Lorenzo Homar, 1953, El cartel en Puerto Rico, 2003; pg. 105*



*Primer concurso de Aguinaldos Puertorriqueños, Rafael Tufiño, 1953, El cartel en Puerto Rico, 2003; pg. 109*



*Nenen de la Ruta Mora, Carlos Raquel Rivera, 1956, El cartel en Puerto Rico, 2003; pg. 115*



*Muchas felicidades, Lorenzo Homar, 1953, El cartel en Puerto Rico, 2004; pg. 105*

**Figure 9 Local Solidarity**

These posters represent this idea of advertising, strengthening and preserving the Puerto Rican identity. *El nenen de la Ruta Mora* is a poster for a movie that incorporates folk tradition in the poster itself by showing images of the Vegigante masks. These masks were used during the *Reconquista* or reconquest era where Roman Catholic Spaniards regained control of the Kingdom of Spain from Muslim rule that lasted over three-hundred years. This tradition is still alive today and these folk celebrations solidify a closely tied history to its nation's Spanish influence.

*Muchas felicidades* and *Segundo concurso de Santeros* are both showing images of a Puerto Rican Christmas. The Three Kings are present in both. While *Muchas felicidades* is only a holiday card-like poster, it is promoting tradition. The Three Kings have brought Puerto Rican children gifts on January 6<sup>th</sup> ever since this tradition was brought from Spain during the colonial period. The *Segundo concurso de Santeros* is taking this a step further by advertising an event and promoting participation. The event is a contest with prize money for first through third place. The contest requires artisans to carve figures of the Three Kings out of wood. Since the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, this folk-art has been specifically a Puerto Rican phenomenon. The Galería Nacional in San Juan actually has an extremely large collection of these figures in an exhibition section of its own. This will be discussed more in-depth in the museums section. The *Primer concurso de Aguinaldos puertorriqueños*, is also advertising a contest for a national phenomenon. The Aguinaldo is uniquely Puerto Rican folk-music that is very closely tied to Christmas and today it is still heard as traditional Christmas music. This poster also advertises that there is prize money while also depicting a common image of a Puerto Rican playing the *güiro* (percussion instrument). These posters are consciously

promoting and encouraging *Puerto Ricaness* and many of those participating were unconsciously preserving their collective identity. These folk-traditions have lasted and are still celebrated today. Over these posters, and similar posters, my impressions are:

This poster is advertising a collection of Jose Campeche's art. An organized display of Campeche's work is like taking people back to a Puerto Rico when it was just recently born and its identity was just forming. (*Pinturas de Jose Campeche y su taller*, Lorenzo Homar, 1959).

What is pictured is another traditional Puerto Rican Christmas image which is being threatened by the colonial situation. In essence, the Three Kings are being replaced by Santa Clause. This is a way to preserve what is already ours instead of forgetting them and adapting new ways of living (*Felices navidades y buen año Nuevo*, Lorenzo Homar, 1955).

DIVEDCO and Lorenzo Homar are wishing the people of Puerto Rico a merry Christmas. Santa is not present, the Three Kings are. The Three Kings are closely tied to a Latino/colonial Spanish influence which is closely tied to the Puerto Rican identity (*Muchas Felicidades*, Lorenzo Homar, 1953).

What it is announcing is something very uniquely Puerto Rican which is the wood carvings of saints. It is definitively promoting the preservation of this art and history/culture (*Segundo concurso de Santeros*, Lorenzo Homar, 1953).

It is advertising for artists that were devoted to painting something that was distinguishably Puerto Rican and did it in a very modernist and international style. His art promoted the Puerto Rican identity and culture (*Exposición de Carlos Irizarry*, Rafael Tufiño, 1955).

These advertised events brought Puerto Ricans together under the context of *Puerto Ricaness*. These events solidified a struggling identity, preserved the Spanish language, and created spaces for Puerto Rican music, art, dance, fashion, and free-expression; it also provided opportunity to Puerto Rican citizens trying to make an honest dollar by selling traditional Puerto Rican food and drink. For this time period's art, the Smithsonian Latino Center (displayed a DIVEDCO exhibition between September 2008

to January 2009) and explained that this institution was dedicated to promoting social change. They expressed this in the following excerpt:

As part of the 2008 program series “Puerto Rico at the Smithsonian,” the Smithsonian Latino Center presents an exhibition of iconic Puerto Rican poster art from the late 1940s to the late 1980s. During that period, the island’s best known graphic artists—Rafael Tufiño, Lorenzo Homar, José Meléndez Contreras, and many others—were enlisted by a government agency known as DIVEDCO (División de Educación de la Comunidad). Their goal was to create art for social change. Brilliant, dramatic, colorful, and didactic, these posters illustrate the island’s hopes and aspirations during the first pivotal decades of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico and into the 1980s (Smithsonian Latino Center 2009).

The Smithsonian institute does not explain what status quo these Puerto Rican artists were determined in challenging. It is left vague and unclear because these artists were involved in various levels of social change. They promoted new government projects such as the building of the *caseríos*, exposed health issues, and promoted canned goods for example; they advised the Puerto Rican people to adapt new modern ways to increase their well being; in other words, they promoted modernity. This reality was already in place in North America and being encouraged worldwide. Then, they also promoted the Puerto Rican identity to preserve a culture that was becoming replaced by these new ways. The latter is social change that is against the previous agenda of modernizing. What has resulted over time has been a hybridization of modernism and tradition.

These artists all trained outside of Puerto Rico. They learned their craft and styles from masters in art from European and North American countries. Some of them traveled to Mexico and saw first-hand the power of art in connecting cultures of people and creating solidarity (specifically Mexican muralists that are considered Avant-garde). During this time of the 50’s and 60’s, the Cold War was being fought all over the

colonized world; relevant to this study, in South and Central America. The *Taller Gráfico Popular* was a Mexican art organization made up of artists painting a Marxist cause to fight off foreign cultural aggression from the United States as well as painting images that documented rebellions breaking out throughout Latin America. About one of these pieces, I wrote as my interpretation that the poster:

Advertises exhibition that was present for a month. It is about Mexican print art; grabados. It is another clever way of using the funds to advertise something in the interests of those wanting international awareness and solidarity (*Exposición de grabados mexicanos*, Rafael Tufiño 1954).

They decried the intrusion and exploitation from the North American Military Industrial Complex and successfully brought international attention to their cause. As a tribute to their work, Rafael Tufiño and Carlos Raquel Rivera produced posters celebrating the TGP's 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary (shown below). This was more than a symbol of appreciation; it was also a way to make the Puerto Rican public aware of movements and situations that resembled their own but was unknown due to the colonial obscurity. International and more specifically regional awareness was cut off for Puerto Rico for similar reasons the American blockade was enacted for Cuba. For Puerto Rico, ideas and the realities were not let in, and for Cuba they were not let out. Cuba wanted to influence and Puerto Rico needed influence in order to achieve Latin American liberation and solidarity with the rest of the region. Numerous posters were produced that brought to the public's attention to entities that had the power to enlighten and inspire. In this sense, posters were meant to create class-consciousness within the exploited population of Puerto Rico by connecting them to those movements already occurring throughout Latin America. These are two of those posters:



others. The highly Marxist and revolutionary displays were first of all for creating awareness and international solidarity. Bringing the art and the ideas to Puerto Rico had the potential to spark a fire; advertising for and documenting these realities and exhibitions legitimized the global anti-colonial movement that Puerto Rico found itself right in the middle of.

### **MODERNITY VS IDENTITY**

Between the years of 1950 to 1965, images depicted the transition between pre-modern traditional Puerto Rican life and work and modern industrialism in a way that was critical of this transition. Propaganda and the example set in the United States during this time was easy to be idealized by a impoverished and starving population that handed most of its agricultural land to North American big business agriculture such as the *South Porto Rico Sugar Company* that monopolized agriculture and made survival difficult for subsistence farming as well as farming for profit (Ayala 1999). The following images documented and questioned this reality.

**Figure 11 Modernity vs. Identity**



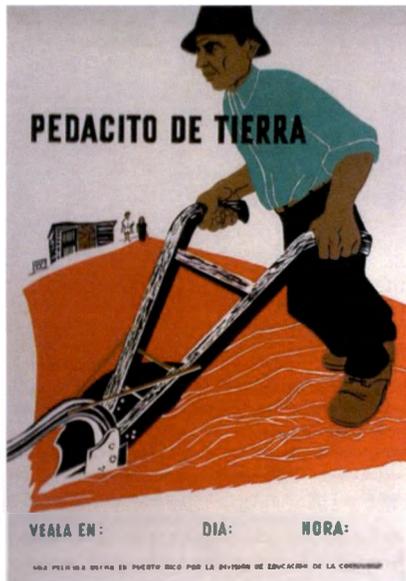
*La agricultura*, Augusto Marin, 1958, MAPR pg. 126



*La construcción*, Rafael Tufiño, 1958, MAPR pg. 126



*La industria*, Carlos Raquel Rivera, 1958, MAPR pg. 124



Pedacito te tierra, Rafael Tufiño, 1952, El Cartel Puertorriqueño, pg. 98.



Cortador de Caña, Rafael Tufiño, 1951, MAPR pg. 68



Cartelera, José Oliver, 1958, MAPR pg. 89

### Figure 11 Modernity vs. Identity continued

All of the images above show either a new modern way of earning a living or the former traditional way that was being replaced. Those lifestyles being replaced are shown by agricultural workers. Most of the agricultural workers are cutting sugar cane that once

was the crop of choice for Puerto Rico. The other paintings are showing the creation of new industries and the construction of urban centers. In the painting *Cartelera*, there is a sharp contrast between the framework of a skyscraper behind a wall that is covered in DIVEDCO posters that are advertising the traditional Christmas, Santero competitions, and international art against North American hegemony.

The paintings are preserving the Puerto Rican identity while at the same time showing the traditional Puerto Rican taking on new modernization projects. The modernization project was welcomed with great hope of eliminating poverty and starvation. These artists, like much of the population, did not want to sacrifice the nation so they attempted to make both contrasting realities possible.

## **ETHNOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS OF THE MUSEUM**

After visiting the museums and analyzing the presentation and the content of the museums, I have identified two groups based on content: National Museums and International Museums. After separating them based on content, I realized that the museums were already also grouped together based on government funding (for Puerto Rico since all museums in Cuba are funded entirely by the state). National museums are those museums that dedicate their display to validating the national identity. The national museums are the largest receivers of government funding. International museums are those museums that have sections displaying other nation's art, contemporary or modern art (following the current art form), or both. Some of the international museums have works that are nation building and anti-colonial but they are placed in a more international or universal context. For example, the Bayamón Museum of Art is

international and is dedicated to contemporary art, but it has works by Rafael Tufiño and other nationalist artists that paint an anti-colonial cause. What is interesting about this reality is that an average receptor of art will likely not notice the anti-colonial critique because of the art is classified to emphasize their forms rather than their significance.

Below are the groups and museums:

<b>National Museums</b>	<b>International Museums</b>
Galería Nacional (Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña) (Viejo San Juan, PR)	Museo de Arte de Caguas (Caguas, PR)
Museo de Arte de Puerto Rico (Santurce, PR)	Museo de Arte Contemporáneo (Santurce, PR)
Museum of History Anthropology and Art (University of Puerto Rico – Rio Piedras)	Museo de Arte de Bayamon (Bayamon, PR)
Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Arte Cubano, La Habana, Cuba	Museo de Arte de Ponce (under renovation at the time of this study but literature was provided explaining the display and content of the museum) (Ponce, Puerto Rico)
Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Arte Universal, La Habana, Cuba	Drago Galería de Arte, La Habana, Cuba
	Centro de Desarrollo de las Artes Visuales, La Habana, Cuba
	Centro de Arte Contemporaneo Wilfredo Lam, La Habana, Cuba

Art museums in Puerto Rico are operated by the municipalities that they reside in. These municipalities are granted autonomy by the Puerto Rican government in how they fund their museum and its operations. The exceptions are the national museums. The Galería Nacional is in Old San Juan and staffed by government employees. The Museo de Arte de Puerto Rico in Santurce, Puerto Rico, is not staffed by government employees, but has been established under government grants. This museum is a special case in its

own because it is massive (130,000 square-feet making it one of the biggest in the Caribbean) and it receives a large portion of its budget from the government and La Compañía de Turismo (Puerto Rico Tourism Company) that is also government operated and funded. This museum is promoted by both and validates its purpose to promote Puerto Rican culture through its exhibition and mission statement:

*El Museo de Arte de Puerto Rico (MAPR), organización sin fines de lucro, fue inaugurado el 1ro de julio de 2000, como un legado al pueblo de Puerto Rico. La misión del MAPR es enriquecer las vidas de sus diversos públicos al proveer y hacerles accesibles el conocimiento, la apreciación y el disfrute de las artes visuales de Puerto Rico y del mundo... (MAPR 2008).* [The Museum of Art of Puerto Rico (MAPR), an organization without monetary ends, was inaugurated July 1, 2000, as a legacy for the nation of Puerto Rico. MAPR's mission is to enrich the lives of its diverse publics while providing and making accessible an understanding, appreciation and enjoyment of the visual arts of Puerto Rico and the world.]

The Museum of History, Anthropology, and Art at the University of Puerto Rico is Puerto Rico's oldest museum space (opened in 1949) and regarded as its most important because of its role in defending the national identity from the cultural aggression imposed by the United States throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This university has been, since its establishment, a safe-place for free speech, assembly, and cultural expression.

The international museums are relatively newer in terms of their existence and will most likely be increasing in numbers as more municipalities across the island begin to open their own. They vary much in funding. The Museo de Arte Contemporáneo receives no government funding what-so-ever and displays contemporary art from all over Latin America. All of its funders are corporate, individual sponsors, and donations made by visitors as well as memberships. It is only a few city blocks from the Museo de Arte de Puerto Rico. The Museo de Arte de Caguas is entirely funded by the

municipality of Caguas. A lot of their collection is donated by Puerto Rican contemporary artists that make it very unique in that it incorporates both of the museum categories. The difference is that the public funding is raised entirely by Caguas. Their staff are also considered government employees; but equivalent to state government employees in the United States. The Museo de Arte de Bayamón is entirely founded by the Luis A. Ferre Foundation that is a local foundation that promotes the display of art in Puerto Rico, not necessarily Puerto Rican art. The Museo de Arte de Ponce was being renovated during the time of this study but literature was made available to understand enough about what is generally displayed and how it is funded. They are also funded by the Luis A. Ferre Foundation as well as corporate and individual sponsors as well as donations and memberships.

Museums from both groups provided resources like libraries, classrooms, free art classes, contests, gift shops and bookstores; although at different levels. Resources available depend on the funding and budget available for its space. They are all involved in their local communities with the Museo de Arte de Ponce, the Museo de Arte de Puerto Rico, and the Museo de Arte Contemporáneo promoting community participation at an exceptional level by my standards from my experience and understanding art and the Puerto Rican community.

## **ORIENTALISM AND NATIONAL IDENTITY**

The Puerto Rican government has more of an interest in promoting and supporting history and displaying a strong and distinguishable cultural identity. The museums that they fund are dedicated to displaying Puerto Rican history as well as images and memories of events and realities seen in Puerto Rico. They are obviously created by artists just like those in the international museums but at the time they were painted; they were painted to fill in the gaps left by colonial propaganda and oppression by both states in order to suppress the culture. The goal was complete cultural assimilation into a time-disciplined society on a path towards modernity and participation in the world market on behalf of the American colonizers. Their purpose was to create class-consciousness in the exploited Puerto Rican masses and seek international solidarity with other Latin American countries going through similar struggles. The art though, did not make it out to international markets. They remained in Puerto Rico and are now on display in the national museums.

The Galería Nacional is operated under the Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña. Again, this institution was founded in 1955 by individuals that put up a good enough fight in order for the local Puerto Rican government to fund such an organization and even further, make it a government organization. Law 89 of the Puerto Rican Legislative Assembly in 1955 established that the institute's purpose was to "contribuir a conservar, promover, enriquecer y divulgar los valores culturales del pueblo de Puerto Rico, para mas amplio y profundo conocimiento y aprecio de los mismos..." [contribute to conserve, promote, enrich and display the cultural values from the country of Puerto Rico, for a more broad and profound knowing and appreciation of the like...] (Diario de

Sesiones 1955). While I was visiting the Galería Nacional, I observed that there was a strong defense of the Puerto Rican *jíbaro* (the traditional Puerto Rican dedicated to living off of the land). They are closely linked to peace, hard work, family and task orientation.

They are defenders of the fatherland and of their culture. On the wall, it read:

*La paz y serenidad con la humildes y el fajo. ¿Quién cortaba la caña en el fuego del día hasta que el horno bajaba? El jíbaro portorriqueño pero luego planteaba las semillas para reproducir su futuro, su familia, su mundo y su tierra [Peace and serenity along with humility and hard work. Who would cut the cane in the day's fire until the oven went down? The Puerto Rican jíbaro but later he would plant the seeds to reproduce his future, his family, his world and his land.]*

The next exhibition room was dedicated to Rafael Tufiño. He just might be Puerto Rico's loudest voice against American imperialism seen through Puerto Rican art. This room contained the sharpest criticism I had seen in all of the visits to the museums. Other artists' work was also displayed within this room's context. In this room I noted that from the titles to the images in his paintings, the messages and emotions evoked fall in line with a defense against cultural aggression and an anti-colonial agenda. He, like many of the more successful Puerto Rican artists, who shared many of his sentiments, trained in other countries such as Spain, the United States, Italy, and Mexico. They were exposed to Avant-garde art (innovative art that was politically charged against imperialism) and its creators. This room/exhibition shows how these artists were messengers of modernism while at the same time defenders of a national identity. This room had a critical message to those waiting for change and encouraged acting towards change. Visual images such as "Mala Entrañita" pleaded the case for praxis instead of just theory. The beast of a North American man drops coins with his left and holds onto the cash with his right. So what Tufiño calls for is what Marx called for: a revolution

where those below would become those at the top. Many references to social justice and human rights are visible. One example is the painting by Rosado del Valle titled “El niño.” The painting depicts a boy selling newspapers that read “Justicia Social” loudly on the front page.



*Mala Entrañita*, Rafael Tufiño, 1955, *Inverted Utopias*, pg. 409

**Figure 12 Anti-North American Imperialism:** This image shows the sharp criticism and the painting that is present at the Galería Nacional which receives the largest percentage and access to government funding since the Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña is a government organization.

This painting as well as the content is identical to that at the University of Puerto Rico’s Museum of History, Anthropology, and Art. When I walked in, the first introductory writing for the visitors referred to Puerto Rico as *nuestro país* or “our country.” The first painting in the museum is Francisco Oller’s *El velorio* (The Wake) which symbolically depicts the death of the Puerto Rican nation. Oller points to when

U.S. citizenship was granted in 1917 as the cause of death. The painting depicts a small infant child (alluding to Puerto Rico) dead in the middle of a house surrounded by those paying respects. Most of those individuals present have no interest in being there mourning and go ahead partaking in other activities paying the least bit of attention to the dead child. It is magnificent. It is huge (96" x 156 1/2")! And the significance is probably the most important in Puerto Rican national art. The painting shows vulgar Spanish traditions and the death of that caused by the North American invasion while the rest of the world shows no interest.

To say the least I was impressed and deeply moved by the piece at the moment I saw it. This piece has been written about and recognized for the symbolism and the emotions evoked. Personally, it was the largest piece I have ever seen in person and its significance and audacity could only be welcomed in this museum that has valued and prided itself in fighting American imperialism. The museum not only displayed national art but also displayed official documents such as historical newspapers that existed under Spanish rule but did not survive North American conquest. The way that the information was written preferred Spanish rule over American rule because Latin America remained connected through its colonial past. Information on the printing press and its distribution by Spain to its New World colonies depicted the rise of literacy and nationalism in Latin America.

These institutions stressed history and legitimacy as a nation. The difference between these institutions is that the University of Puerto Rico was free of government interference since its establishment in the first years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. What they started displaying at the opening of the its museum in 1949 was recently adopted by the

Puerto Rican government when it opened the Museo de Arte de Puerto Rico in 2000 and the Galería Nacional in 2007.

This is in sharp contrast to the display of art in anti-colonial Cuba. Cuba had already found a space for its art before the Cuban Revolution of 1959 started. In fact, after the revolution, its national museum expanded even more. This was at the same time that Puerto Rico was still struggling for national liberation and struggling even more for spaces that local artists could use to display their art.

The Museo de Bellas Artes, Arte Cubano and the Museo de Bellas Artes, Arte Universal, both in La Habana are the same in that they provide ancestral legitimacy. The first, displays everything Cuban from the 16<sup>th</sup> century to the present day. It organized the exhibitions by time periods: colonial period (16<sup>th</sup> century to 19<sup>th</sup> century), turn of the century (1894-1927), the rise of modern art (1927-1938), modern art consolidation (1938-1951), other perspectives of modern art (1951-1963), contemporary art (1960-1970), contemporary art (1967-1981), and contemporary art from 1979 to the present day. The Arte Universal museum displayed classical art from many western nations as well as ancient Rome, Greece, Egypt, with exponents from Mesopotamia. The nations represented in national art sections were the previous seven academies of art: German, Italian, Flemish, Dutch, Spanish, French, and British. Furthermore, the museum also displayed art from Asia, North America (United States), Mexico, the Antilles (Puerto Rico, Cuba, and the Dominican Republic) as well as South America. These museums are immense and their resources for public use are adequate for any researcher and individual just seeking information about art and history. The Cuban art museum was built in 1954 and is dedicated to display tradition, or narrative scenes of Cuban life. Since then, it has

expanded to include modern art which represents a “phase of maturity and coherence in Cuba, drawing together a complex range of styles and influences” (Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes 2009). The Contemporary Art section is dedicated to those artists and art that “nurtured and forested by the triumph of the Revolution” (Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes 2009). This section shows many paintings, including graphic art that celebrates the Cuban Revolution, its revolutionaries, and the country that was created.

In comparison with the Puerto Rico, even though Cuba seems to be more cut-off from the outside world, it has preserved large spaces that display those foreign expressions. This cannot be said for Puerto Rico although foreign art is present in small spaces. This situation reflects the colonial and anti-colonial situation for both nations. Cuba has access to the entire world, but not the United States where as Puerto Rico has complete access to the United States, but is cut off from the rest of the world. And then, Cuba’s national museum of Cuban art (opened in 1954) reflects directly the pride and attachment of the Cuban people to their homeland: Cuba. Interestingly, *La Madre Patria* means motherland in Puerto Rico. This motherland is Spain and it is explicitly so in the Galería Nacional as well as the University of Puerto Rico. I had noticed that this phrase was absent in Cuba although Cuba’s history is almost identical to that of Puerto Rico while they were under Spain. I had asked one of the museum officials in Cuba why Spain was not referred to as *La Madre Patria*. The answer was simply because they do not refer to Spain as that because Spain is not the motherland; Cuba is. This is true anti-colonial thought: when a nation can imagine itself as equal to all others and not in anyway inferior.

The two national museums in Havana really demonstrated Cuban pride even though it was more than just Cuban art. And the reason is because their art is at least equal to any other nation's art and no less whereas in Puerto Rico, even the Museo de Arte de Puerto Rico (Puerto Rico's biggest and most complete national museum) subordinates Puerto Rican history to that of Western Europe and the United States. I noted, when visiting the MAPR that the discourse imprinted in on the walls explaining the divisions within the museum referred to western Europe's art as the gold standard.

For Cuba and Puerto Rico, on top of providing great educational services to its people, they are incredibly attractive for tourism. Cuba's national museums were erected in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century while Puerto Rico's national museums came around at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. With the exception of the University of Puerto Rico and the Museo de Arte de Ponce (erected around the same time), the interests in creating spaces for artistic expression in Puerto Rico was no where near that of Cuba. The United States' and Puerto Rico's state funded business, not creativity. Visual art was marginalized because it was inconvenient to the business agenda. While Cuba's art museums attracted a consistent flow of tourism and awareness, Puerto Rico's provided a space for critical resistance. Now, because of global tourism and the example set by the Cuban national museums, Puerto Rico and the United States have a market for the art painted by the Puerto Rican nation. Orientalism in this case is just another example of decisions made based on profitability rather than humanity.

## **SOCIAL JUSTICE**

The international institutions promote art and more specifically contemporary art. The art has not separated itself from issues of social justice and anti-colonialism. All the international museums provide evidence of this. They also take this a step further by also presenting the same struggles from other Latin American countries. The awareness that the Muse de Arte Contemporáneo conveys is one of awareness of the effects of modernization and globalization on culture production and preservations; that the memories that are formed, be memories of balanced understanding. In other words, the collection promotes alternative media awareness and promotes democratic reality construction. Themes that the museum was critical of were: colonialism (shown in allusions to Puerto Rican annexionism), corporate exploitation of the Caribbean (shown by paintings critical of brands that exploit the Caribbean population in sweat-shop labor), corporate initiated modernization (shown by paintings of brands bringing change), corporate propaganda (slogans in displays and paintings), government inefficiency (allusions to former Puerto Rican governors and political party slogans), mass culture (brand identification), loss of memory (videos titled “exercises to fight oblivion”), history and the oppressiveness of it (videos showing different perspectives of reality from those in power and those disempowered). For Puerto Rico, displays stood out as the writings of Albizu Campos showed their selves through visual representations.

Corporate exploitation was another theme present at the MAC. It was strongly visible in a room that organized large paintings with vibrant colors and logos intended to stimulate the mind of a child. Why specifically a child? Because, as it was printed on the display in the room, American urban fashion brands such as *Famous* use child labor in

the Caribbean in order to limit the cost of production and then turn around and sell their product in the Caribbean (very trendy in Puerto Rico which is the United States' largest Caribbean market) and to the rest of the world. This can be more of a threat to the state considering its alliance and investments with American multinationals.

The artists of the MAC are all Latin American with a significant amount of local Puerto Rican artists. All exhibits were empowering and all demonstrated power struggles with the artists representing those oppressed by the powers that be. The museum is also very involved with the local community. When I visited it happened to be las Navidades. Every year the museum dedicates the basement hallways leading to the documentation center for Christmas cards created by local school children. The hallways were lined with Christmas cards displaying the traditional Puerto Rican Christmas, the food, the music, and the Three Kings. From my reflection on this museum, I wrote:

The entire collection was overall small in size but very provoking of thought and emotion. Overall, there is a strong message of outcry for social justice (global and taking place right in our backyards) and witty social commentary on society and discourse, politics and inequality where Puerto Rico is only a part of it. The material was not decontextualized in the fashion of a national gallery and presented as Latin American. On my walk back to the car from the museum, I couldn't help but look around at the city and the people and wonder about alternative forms of achieving modernity without compromising cultural identity and history. I think this was the purpose of their collection. It makes too much sense.

This theme of social justice in the 21<sup>st</sup> century was echoed at the Museo de Arte de Caguas. This museum is 100 percent funded by the municipal government that is determined in establishing its own identity. This city is fortunate because a large amount of recognized artists are originally from Caguas—they donate some of their works to the museum in order to display it for the public and admission to this museum is free of

charge all of the time (Monday through Saturday). The museum has a total of four exhibitions where two of them are permanent. I was impressed by the quantity and the quality of the works on display as well as how they were organized. It was not what I had been expecting from an entity that was government; I had not seen such creativity and justice done to art and its meaning. This museum celebrates successful art and encourages it from their community (local and national). On their exhibition, I wrote:

The permanent collections were contemporary art that was sharp and highly critical. The existentialism was present and very heavy/thick. Aspects that were tackled critically ranged from machismo in Puerto Rican men, passive aggressive colonizers, time/watches/clocks that represent a critical view of modernity and how it has been implemented onto Puerto Rico, etc...

A conversation that arose from the individual working as a host took place about futurism, "alive" museums. Caguas' museum was alive. Some of the museums I have visited, more specifically the national/identity museums could be described as what futurists call graveyard museums. ...The grandeur of the exhibitions can be intimidating, which was a sentiment I shared with the tour guide. I have felt intimidated from such museums like the Galería Nacional and the MAPR. The history involved along with the ultra-significance of a nation transforms art that has been painted for art, or for mobilization, or for documentation and they become tombstones for memories of a place that no longer exists. But in Caguas, it still exists; it's very alive and unique. The display is dynamic although it's been the simplest museum I have visited. The ideas that are presented through contemporary art show a creative and critically thinking population that documents the current existence.

The museum gave the impression of an institution that although humble and lacking certain resources that were present in other museums was very self-sufficient and focused their energies and funds towards something purely substantial. In their main permanent room (the one the receptor first encounters after entering the museum) certain paintings were improvised in their display. For example, one very large and very recent

addition to the collection was placed in front of two others that were waiting on a space to be found in order for them to be moved. Throughout the museum, there were writings on the wall for the public to see. The messages were positive and empowering. The museum promoted creativity and awareness for citizens of Caguas and others who come to see. The mission statement that was painted on a wall inside the museum included:

Lealtad, compromiso, humanismo, profesionalismo, integridad y valentía para un Puerto Rico creativo. [loyalty, duty, humanism, professionalism, integrity and bravery for a creative Puerto Rico.]

## **WAITING**

The Museo de Arte Contemporáneo had a room that was dedicated to an artist by the name of Abigail Pantoja Bermúdez. This exhibition tackled the reality of waiting for change. Because it has been a theme throughout Puerto Rican history, she puts a modern spin on the concept by creating replicas of bus stop benches. As one sits at the bus stop, one looks around at the images on the wall. The images are of people waiting at bus stops in Santurce. So this is very local; just walking outside of the museum one will find one of the bus stops that is pictured in that room. Around the city (back inside the exhibition room) you see references to those that support American presence in Puerto Rico. Stickers of the Puerto Rican Republican Party were present which use the Republican elephant logo with a '51' that represents Puerto Rico as the 51<sup>st</sup> state. As you sit there and wait, and surround yourself with more waiting, you understand how the artist feels that this phenomenon is idiotic. One feels that there are better things to be doing than waiting for something unknown which is nothing.

In contrast to this representation, I was able to experience constant change in the displays of Contemporary Art in the Cuban Museums (Centro de Artes Visuales Wilfredo

Lam, Centro de Arte Contemporaneo Wilfredo Lam, Centro de Desarrollo de las Artes Visuales, and Drago Galería de Arte). These museums were undergoing preparation for the 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Biennial in La Habana. I was allowed to enter and see the displays still up and conversations with staff allowed me to understand the purpose and collections. Of the collections I saw, I was able to witness exhibitions titled “Just on Time,” “Objetos” (objects), “Waterset,” and “Landscape.” “Just on Time” displays people waiting but it is pedagogical, or that they are in the process of learning. Cubans are also waiting for change, but this exhibition showed the works of such artists as Ivan Capote, Yoan Capote, Wilfredo Prieto, and Rene Francisco that show people learning from each other. The displays show growth. For example a tricycle next to a bicycle, and young people explaining things to older people, and a young child sitting in a tree contrasting a guerrilla hiding in a tree. “Just in Time,” “Objetos,” and “Waterset” showed resilience. They displayed what the Cuban people do when they do not receive necessities or luxuries; they go ahead and create them out of the things they do have. For example, since they could not print out pictures of each other because of the high costs, art pieces showed portraits of people created by objects available that were tied to the significance of the image: a drawing of a girl with a real necklace around the neck of the cartoon figure.

Even in colonialism people do not have to wait for change; they just voluntarily do so. They depend on their colonizers for their well-being. It is what they have been conditioned to do. Although the populations of Cuba and Puerto Rico live relatively similar, their struggles are different. The struggles though are a direct result of the situations imposed on them by states that dominate them and manipulate them in order to

preserve dominance. Freedom in this sense is arbitrary; it is not what the states define them as but how much and what the populations express. Both express injustice and domination; but one feels more in power to change according to the expressions. Both nations, either way, are in waiting; perhaps waiting for the powers that be to rid themselves of themselves.

### **ISOLATION AND OBSCURITY**

The last of the international museums that I visited was the Museo de Arte de Bayamón. It had just opened in February 2007 and I noticed it was still incomplete. This museum was funded by the Luis A. Ferre Foundation and located at the Luis A. Ferre Science Park in Bayamón. It was a very small space. The museum had 5 different exhibits: Spanish/Puerto Rican colonial art (15th-17th century), Puerto Rican art, International art, and more Puerto Rican art. The first section of Puerto Rican art had art that I had not seen before in any publications used or museums visited. It was of abstract contemporary art from the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This art is very difficult to come by because it had been marginalized within Puerto Rico by the Puerto Rican School and because it was art from Puerto Rico, during the time it was painted, it did not make it outside of the island. Thus this art suffered multiple marginalization and until recently was kept in private galleries or in the artists' own archives. The Museo de Arte de Ponce has many of these paintings also but it is closed for renovations until 2010. That museum was opened in 1959 by future governor Luis A. Ferre who bought 27 paintings from New York and displayed them in that museum (Museo de Arte de Ponce 2009). This foundation, these museums, and the city of Bayamón (governed by a statehood family

since 1977) all have statehood party connections yet it is not supposed to be a factor affecting the collection and purpose. The Luis A. Ferré Science Park is a space in Bayamón that promotes education.

*...(educación) juega un papel principal. Es por ello que el público puede disfrutar de una serie de museos en los que se tratan temas sobre Arqueología, Transportación, Trenes, Arte, Energía Eléctrica, Salud, Astronomía y las Ciencias Físicas y Naturales. Ha sido designado con el nombre del ex gobernador de Puerto Rico Don Luis Antonio Ferré. [Education is the principal cause. It's for the public's benefit that they can enjoy a series of museums that are about the themes of Archaeology, Transportation, Trains, Art, Electric Energy, Well-Being, Astronomy, and Physical and Natural Sciences. It was designed with the name of the ex-governor of Puerto Rico Don Luis Antonio Ferré (Municipio de Bayamón, 2009).*

The museum has promoted modernity since its opening in 1982. All of the museums promote science in one way or another. It was not until 2007 that the art museum was added to include culture. This is the same political party that once wanted to abolish the Institute of Puerto Rican Culture in the late 1970's. It was not until the global tourism boom that the colonial government of Puerto Rico began promoting and supporting national identity art. If I consider local politics and the agenda of the statehood party and their investment into modernization and assimilation into the United States, it makes sense why they are now promoting culture and included modernist Puerto Rican art: it represents the assimilationist Puerto Rican culture that can enter the United States as the 51<sup>st</sup> state. Why an art museum in the middle of a science park? Culture is now profitable and in the global tourism industry, a national identity is more marketable. A more complete analysis is needed on political parties, agendas, funding, and manifestations of ideology.

As I went through the collection, I wrote in my notes that "it is hard to find the critical element; no theme is present other than being Puerto Rican or painting

aesthetically beautiful visual images." It was mixed of memories of Puerto Rican culture such as Osiris Delgado's untitled piece that showed young Puerto Rican children in the mid 20th century playing with tops and wearing traditionally memorable garb synonymous with the baby boomer children and previous generation before modernization/Americanization.

The international collections were made up of the art of artists such as Henry Moore, Mark Chayall, Wilfredo Lam, Pablo Picasso, Salvador Dahli, Carlos Raquel Rivera, Henry Matisse, Alexander Calder, Rembrandt, Joan Miro, and Rafael Tufiño. Until this point, Tufiño's work has been displayed along the likes of Lorenzo Homar, Carlos Raquel Rivera and other Puerto Rican nationalist painters who filled their work with anti-colonial messages against American cultural aggression. By setting Tufiño alongside those it did, it focused the emotions on the aesthetic beauty of the styles and representations and not on the critique. I had noted that even the dates of the works were not similar to each other and they were displayed amongst each other based on the styles used to paint them.

The museum was relatively new and in my opinion not yet complete, but it was open to the public. My first reaction was to believe it was underfunded and not well maintained. The museum still felt underfunded and charged admission to park and to enter the museum. It appeared underfunded because of many flaws in the presentation/mistakes in the titles and artist's information, and lack of maintenance overall. It was in an insignificant building overshadowed by the rest of the park. It is a park dedicated to science, and has a museum of aerospace, war (WWI and WWII), the

Space Race, a planetarium, etc., it was highly centralized on abstract art and art for the sake of art.

I noted that several biases affected this museum visit. I am from Bayamón and have very close ties to this city and my family who for generations have called this place home. I expected more from what I had to pay in parking and admission. The collection was a good one. It had some great pieces and the importance of this museum visit came not from the presentation but from the art that was deemed Puerto Rican. It was art that is very difficult to come by because of Puerto Rico's turbulent history and internal power struggles resulted in a divided population that expressed itself from all points of view. Why is that art here? Does it have to do with local politics, political parties of Puerto Rico, and what they choose to support and promote?

## VI. CONCLUSION

I used multiple methods (triangulation) to analyze how colonialism affects the expressions of a nation. To examine expression, I analyzed art, the art museum, and explored the colonial state's involvement in art in a colonized nation (Puerto Rico) and compared it to an anti-colonial nation (Cuba). Because this study incorporates subjectivity, although the analysis of the context intended to limit the variation of subjective interpretation, I acknowledge that other interpretations of the data resulting in the findings and conclusion may exist. Further studies are needed and a continuation of this study is also possible. Many more resources are available that were not disposable to this study. An even wider incorporation of resources and comparative analyses of documentation is recommended as well as comparisons involving more nations (Puerto Rico is not the only colony left in the world).

Art is a manifestation of expression; the creative and critical capacity of the human individual that produces visual images which evoke emotion and reactions from the receptors of the images. This is a subaltern expression because it is expressed from a colonized point of view. This is the case for Puerto Rican art. The museum is the display by the people/masses or by the state with state interests. Galleries can be privately funded so the museum was analyzed because of its unquestionable world presence and close relationship with the state. Thus the message perceived by the individual recepto

is a state communiqué with statements about the history of the nation, its legitimacy, and its creative manifestations.

I have interpreted the results of this study using a combination of theories that are critical of modernity and value the sense of multiculturalism. These theories are World-Systems Theory, Dependency Theory, and Post-colonial Theory. The advantage to using these three perspectives is that world-systems is adequate in explaining imperialism and agenda behind international relations in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century; dependency theory captures the situation experienced by the masses from where these expressions are produced; and Post-colonial Theory, as Gayatri Spivak (1996) explains, has the ability to rewrite history from the bottom up; taking the masses or the proletarian point of view by analyzing their free expressions. One might say that high art/culture is not using a bottom up approach but I disagree in this situation because high art/culture in a colonized territory is still subjected to marginalization and obscurity that disempowers the entire community. Post-colonial theory has its similarities to multiculturalism in that it values diversity/heterogeneity and the ability to solve humanity's problems by incorporating various diverse perspectives that are only available through their preservation.

### **ISOLATION AND LACK OF EXPORT ART**

The study reveals a number of patterns in Puerto Rican art that show how the nation becomes vulnerable to domination. We see that being a colonized country reduces the power of that nation. First, it prevents outreach through popular expressions. The path to modernity was imposed rather than chosen. And if there was a degree of choice, it was constrained by misery, poverty, and hunger. Puerto Rico's isolation by being an

in-between nation has prevented equality with the rest of the world comprised of sovereign nations. All of these nations are travelling the path to modernity in some way or another or at different rates preserving different traits of their culture. This path through history was similar for the nations of Cuba and Puerto Rico up until the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. They both were going down the path towards modernity and thus a more individually centered global capitalist economy and society. It was not until the Cuban Revolution in 1959 that Cubans began to pursue a different course through history. Both Cuba and Puerto Rico have shown resistance to this hegemonic path to western modernity (although at different rates).

Through world/cultural systems perspective, Puerto Rico's high art, developed by the ruling class and administrative strata of the world empire, changes once the world empire changes. Puerto Rico followed the changes in high art while it was incorporated under the Kingdom of Spain, but this study shows a resistance to the new high art developed by the New York School (Abstract Expression becoming the new hegemonic form of visual expression) until artists could find a way to use it for their cause. Cuba, a nation that achieved national liberation on the same scale as Vietnam and Algeria during the same time, felt more comfortable accepting changes in high art while Puerto Rico developed its own school of resistance and national identity preservation resulting in a high culture marginalization on various levels. Within Puerto Rico, contemporary art (art following the current academy) has been marginalized by its own academy which has been subordinated and kept in obscurity by its in-between colonial situation. So in essence, art from the nation of Puerto Rico cannot be exported. The expressions of life in Puerto Rico were not able to be understood by outside populations because they were not

seen. Instead, the public was misled by the colonizers who explained what life in Puerto Rico was like according to their agenda and perspectives.

## **WHY WAIT?**

Colonialism needs dependency in order to be reproduced. Puerto Rico has been a colony since the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Apart from struggles seen in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Puerto Rico has been kept waiting for the change and abolishment of colonialism. False-consciousness in Puerto Rican society consists of the belief that the best situation will be decided upon by the United States Federal Government. The island is aligned with the nation it perceives as the world's richest and most technologically advanced. Its people feel fortunate to be subordinate to the United States and willingly continue to align themselves with North America. They are conditioned to be dependent and to look up to the superior nation. There is always a chance for a revolution that changes this situation. But, because the global market is steered in the direction where business is more efficient between rich and poor states, Puerto Rico's absolute standard of living is not as beneficial to corporations looking for the most bang for its buck. And the people of Puerto Rico are too proud of its national identity to allow the nation to be fully incorporated as a state. The United States will most likely not have interests in incorporating a nation of 3.9 million minority half as rich as the poorest state in the union: Mississippi. In the future, Puerto Rico will either remain a colony or given its sovereignty.

Dependency and Post-colonial Theory both question western liberal modernity (hegemony). American imperialism has been a direct result of unfolding capitalism and

the need for competition. The United States has had to become the global leader in hegemony and cultural aggression because of its complete commitment and development of hyper-capitalism; “hyper” because of its impressiveness in monetary wealth to its multinationals that are present in virtually every corner of the globe; and the unbalanced (regarding reciprocity) economic and social relations that are in direct conflict with the very values that the nation rebelled against in order to achieve its own national liberation.

Dependency is the “result not the abstract logic of capital accumulation... but of particular relationships and struggles between social classes and groups at the international as well as at the local level” (Kapoor 2002: 649). A theme present as a result of the social situations in Puerto Rico is the idea of waiting: accepting reality versus creating reality. Colonialism causes people to wait. Individuals are socialized and conditioned to accept change but not create it. They express less the reality they create and express more the reality they see; reproduce the social world instead of producing the social world.

Cardoso and Faletto (1979) focus on local social groups and practices that reproduce and/or resist imperialism. In this case, those that resist exist in an ‘enclave situation’ where foreign interests dominate. In Puerto Rico it is the economy, the products consumed and the idea that one of my respondents, Lisa explained as part of the colonial mentality: the idea that what is foreign is better. Less national control is a consequence of this. According to these authors, the local dependency is dictated by the nature of alliances between local and foreign classes/groups/ideologies. For Puerto Rico, unlike Cuba after the Revolution, the colonial state has allied itself with North American

multinational corporate interests creating an economic and social subordination that has affected how the populace express themselves toward their colonizers.

Puerto Rican art tells a story of American cultural domination while also making up ground from the lack of literature on this topic from the Puerto Rican nation. In order to develop or reach modernity, the Puerto Rican state has allowed a dependency to be created. Through control and influence in the institutions of social control (education, religion, and law enforcement), the United States has successfully established a military industrial complex as well as a prison industrial complex that reflects the interests of those on the mainland.

## **ORIENTALISM**

Because of these weaknesses/vulnerabilities, Puerto Rican artists have been critical of North American imperialism. This shows up in its dedication to anti-colonial art and resisting the changes in the art world in order to better communicate its messages to the masses. In fact, anti-colonial art was so common and promoted that it actually marginalized art for different purposes.

We know that external threats cause internal cohesion. This shows up in Puerto Rican art by the promotion of national solidarity as well as cultural solidarity that shows up in the subject matter of art during middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century; during the initial Cold War period.

A logical question to ask is: why is it possible for a colony to resist cultural influence from the colonizing powers while being funded by its own colonial state that is allied with the federal colonizing state? The answer becomes orientalism in a global

tourism industry that the colonizer profits from. Orientalism is “the systematic body of theory and practice that constructs or represents the orient” (Kapoor 2002: 650). Edward Said (1979) applies orientalism to the other and that is the variation of orientalism that is adequate for this study. Theory represents ideology; the cultural/intellectual production, arguments, and images while the practice are the museums, universities, media, and the colonial administration. Global tourism has become a monstrous industry that dominates the economies of tropical nations world-wide. How different and attractive could Puerto Rico be if its culture were identical to that of the mainland United States? A national identity has to be preserved either way and it is the reason why the colonial state has allowed subversive art to be displayed. While North America and North Americans are depicted as “rational, peaceful, liberal and logical” (Kapoor 2002: 650) the art of Cuba and Puerto Rico shows that the perception of Cubans and Puerto Ricans do not follow orientalist theory of “irrational, degenerate, primitive, mystical, suspicious, sexually depraved” (650), but I will suggest that it does show these cultures as lost in pre-modernity and in need of paternalistic direction from a colonial perspective.

For Puerto Rico, subversion has been present in nationalist discourse and the art; especially during the turbulent 1950’s that saw the island flirt with national liberation at the same time as Cuba. Homi Bhaba’s concept of *hybridity* results when changes come from the imperial nation down to the colonized nation but is adapted in a way that that allows the changes to fit the culture and not assimilate it. For Cuba, these changes in art forms were welcomed, incorporated and used with great frequency. But for Puerto Rico, characteristics of these new modernist forms (Abstract Expressionism) were adapted but remained apart from the Puerto Rican School unless it communicated the anti-colonial

messages to the public in ways that they would understand consciously or subconsciously. Puerto Rico's art has remained realist or at least with clear visible representations in order to evoke emotions and reactions in those citizens who do not have trained eyes for understanding visual art. A large proportion of visual art from Puerto Rico documented colonial injustices and provoked reactions and nationalist sentiments from the masses—very similar to the patriotic displays designed to be used to incite the French Revolution. This was possible because of the states' (colonial and colonizer) hands off approach to visual art in Puerto Rico. Lack of funding and opportunities certainly made it more difficult for Puerto Ricans to become artists and paint, but enough innovation, courage and determination existed that successfully created and filled a Puerto Rican cartel.

Puerto Rico's state as well as the United States' approach has been one of hands-off. This is seen by lack of governing and available scholarship and marketing available to Puerto Rican artists and its institutions. The art of Puerto Rico has stayed within the Puerto Rican nation and has been kept relatively obscure as a result of its in-between political status. A strong folkloric identity has resulted because of this which equates a strong and consistent institution of tourism for cultural experiences. Cuba and Puerto Rico are very comparable in their generation of wealth via tourism, but for Puerto Rico, the United States benefits because of its investment in Puerto Rico's economy which again relies on American multinationals as well as shipping lines for everything that comes in and goes out.

During and after the Enlightenment, Puerto Rico and Cuba were colonies under the Kingdom of Spain. At the time, European powers were laden with "a will for power"

as Michel Foucault (1995: 12) describes. This will for power is a will to “control, manipulate, even incorporate, what is a manifestly different world” (Foucault 1995: 12). The North American desire to be a global power, seen by the Manifest Destiny expansion and the incorporation of new territories at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Hawaii, the Philippines, Guam, Puerto Rico, Cuba, and military occupation of Caribbean and Central American nations in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century) falls in line and supports Foucault’s theory that imperialist nations (Wallerstein’s core nations) systematically had a duty to manage and even produce the Orient (in this study, pre-modern societies) politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically and imaginatively during the post enlightenment period (1995: 3).

Spivak (1988) concludes those who cannot speak cannot because they are not empowered. Puerto Rican art’s obscurity because of colonial realities and colonially constructed obstacles disempower those who have the power to speak, write, draw/paint; express the injustices of reality. Their voices are mediated and appropriated by others. Although the expressions disappear, the memories and documentation remain; although tainted they represent an identity that is not so different from the current reality.

The role of a post-colonial critic is to record this silence or disappearance so as to valorize the difference revealed by the disenfranchisement... to criticize the domination of imperial discourses (Kapoor 2002: 653).

The obscurity that Puerto Rican artists have painted from in the 20<sup>th</sup> century has told a far different story than what has come to be known through hegemonic discourse. It has been one that has resisted imperialism and preserved its national identity through various means. A true transculturation has developed over the last century that represents

the island's history well. Artists have filled a void that has been left by the marginalization of democracy in Puerto Rico. This study suggests that many decisions made by those in power have not been either for or against the sentiments of its population, but for basic for-profit decisions that has steered modernity in a unique way as to incorporate culture in industry. The state of Puerto Rico has recently found a market for its history through tourism and displays it for its own benefit and hopes that it will trickle down to the masses. But this transgression is still based in dependency and will only reach so far as the limits of colonialism; it will only go as far as it is allowed, by its colonizer and by the market that it has been placed into.

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