



TALLER ALMA BORICUA 1969-1989

REFLECTING ON TWENTY YEARS OF THE PUERTO RICAN WORKSHOP

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Dedicated to our friends and fellow artists Gilbert Hernández, Víctor (Vitín) Linares, Carlos Osorio, Martín (Tito) Pérez, Jorge Soto

TALLER BORICUA 20TH ANNIVERSARY EXHIBIT

TALLER

Alma
BORICUA

REFLECTING ON TWENTY YEARS OF
THE PUERTO RICAN WORKSHOP

1969 – 1989

EL MUSEO DEL BARRIO

SEPTEMBER 15 – APRIL 15, 1990



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

EL MUSEO DEL BARRIO

Petra Barreras del Rio

Exhibitions and publications are collaborative projects by definition. Nevertheless, **Taller Alma Boricua: Reflecting on Twenty Years of the Puerto Rican Workshop, 1969-1989** involved many more true collaborators than it is usual in this type of endeavor. It also became a working partnership between El Taller Boricua and El Museo del Barrio. I feel fortunate to have had Irma Ayala, Marcos Dimas and Fernando Salicrup as full partners in this project.

El Museo del Barrio is indebted to many individuals and organizations who also participated in the development of this exhibition and its accompanying catalogue. Rafael Colón Morales, El Museo's former curator refined the original idea for a twentieth anniversary exhibition. He understood the importance of a retrospective based on historical research. Diógenes Ballester, an accomplished artist on his own right, conducted the research and prepared the material to be used for the exhibition and catalogue. He not only wrote the Annotated Chronology in this publication, but moreover he acted as Consulting Curator for the exhibition. During the course of his investigation he gained much insight from Rafael Colón Morales and Marcos Dimas, present co-director of El Taller Boricua. Mr. Ballester's love for research, attentiveness to detail, and sensitivity toward the artists were vital assets to all phases of this project. He is to be credited with all of its successes and none of its failures.

Many of our best regarded poets read their work in two literary events during the exhibition. Their participation made this a special event. The cassette included in the special edition of this catalogue documents their unique contribution to this twentieth anniversary celebration. Susana Torruella Leval was an excellent moderator for the panel that produced two significant papers by Lucy Lippard and Rafael Montañez Ortiz. They are also included in this publication.

The visual artists-members of El Taller, past and present, were very generous with their time and in lending their work for installation. We are truly grateful for their cooperation. The collectors, Taller Boricua, Marcos Dimas, the Estate of Jorge Soto, Néstor Otero, and Armando Soto provided us with unique pieces that gave depth to the exhibition.

Brenda Alejandro, Carlos Ortiz Chevres and Larry Turner from El Museo's staff have been outstanding collaborators in organizing this exhibition. Elsie Aquino, Evelyn Collazo, Arlene Dávila and Pedro Villarini worked tirelessly on the many versions of the manuscript.

Marcia Tucker and the New Museum deserve a special mention. Ten years ago they invited El Taller to participated in an exhibition of various artists' collaboratives in New York City. This turned out to be the last group exhibition that El Taller had at a museum. Ms. Tucker's vision, and the forum she provides for art that exists outside the mainstream are to be commended.

Finally, we are extremely grateful to the Rockefeller Foundation, the New York Council on the Arts, and Art Matters, Inc. for their generous support. It is their commitment to alternative forms of art that made this exhibition and publication possible.

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


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TALLER ALMA BORICUA

REFLECTING ON TWENTY YEARS OF THE PUERTO RICAN WORKSHOP

El Museo del Barrio is proud to present **Taller Alma Boricua: Reflecting on Twenty Years of the Puerto Rican Workshop, 1969–1989**. This exhibition and its accompanying publication is a well deserved tribute to the successful efforts of a group of visual artists dedicated to training and supporting talented young people. This project also records the participation of El Taller Boricua in landmark events that affected the course of the arts in New York during the last twenty years. But most importantly, it strives to present the variety and excellence of the largely undocumented artistic contributions of its members.

In working toward the exhibition we discovered unexpected and important primary sources that trace the formation of a Puerto Rican artistic community in East Harlem. While the main goal remained the mounting of the exhibition, the research and systematic organization of El Taller's archives became an inevitable and central aspect of our project. This led us to artists who had been associated with the organization in its early years.

Oral histories and primary documents such as photographs, catalogues, clippings, and manuscripts were gathered. They recorded events, early locations, artists no longer active and artwork that has been lost since. Among the most symbolic objects found is a wooden talisman carved by Rafael Tufiño, and ritualistically signed by all the founding members. It evokes the spirit of community that has been the driving force within El Taller. We also found what is perhaps the earliest poster ever printed at the graphics workshop. It identifies the newly formed organization as Taller Alma Boricua.*

An outgrowth of the research was the discovery of historical material relating to economic and political issues of importance in East Harlem during the seventies and eighties. El Taller artists reflected and represented those issues in their work, and moreover they played an active role in community organizing. In the late sixties and early seventies they participated in numerous protests, including those

Introduction

Petra Barreras del Rio

■ OPPOSITE Rafael Tufiño "Taller Alma Boricua" Silkscreen print, 23" x 17 1/2", 1970

organized by the Artworkers Coalition. This is discussed in the essays by Marcos Dimas, Lucy Lippard and Rafael Montañez Ortiz that appear in this catalogue. Also during that period they supported many community groups in promoting their causes by producing posters and fliers free of charge. They were specially active in collaborating with Puerto Rico's pro-independence movement, and the Young Lords—a militant political party and the counterpart of the Black Panthers in the Puerto Rican barrios. This party's stance against racial injustice and the violence of ill-distributed resources had special resonance for the members of El Taller. They had experienced both in their own flesh.

In 1974, a tragic incident shook the Puerto Rican artistic community in New York. Martín (Tito) Pérez, a talented young artist who had joined the organization in 1972, died in police custody. His arrest, while playing conga drums in the subway, was witnessed by other artists who were also "booked". Triggered by Tito's death, El Taller organized human rights protests to focus public attention on police brutality and racism. Virtually all the artists and poets affiliated with the organization, created, out of rage, accomplished work in the best tradition of political art. Several of the works in the exhibition and this catalogue reflect and represent with great pathos that traumatic event.

During the period of 1972 to 1978, El Taller was extremely active, as documented in the Annotated Chronology by Diógenes Ballester in this catalogue. Interdisciplinary collaborations occurred spontaneously as many diverse artists, musicians and writers visited regularly the Madison Avenue loft. In this regard El Taller was fostering early on a mode of work that became popular in the New York art scene during the eighties.

In the early eighties, El Taller acquired computer equipment and programs specially designed for artistic application. This represented a mayor investment for an organization whose modest budget could not afford full-time salaries for its administrators. In this exhibition, the highly lyrical computer-generated prints by Fernando Salicrup are a prime example of the creative edge that El Taller has maintained throughout its history using a great variety of mediums in unorthodox ways.

Since the mid-eighties, this organization has been quite

active with issues of housing in East Harlem. Their artists' housing project, while not completed, is the most developed of its type in New York City. El Taller has been successful in securing space for their needs, and continues to identify real estate opportunities for other not-for-profit organizations in East Harlem. Housing is perhaps one of the two or three most pressing issues for 1990. This group of artists, organized around a community-based institution, had understood its importance and looked for permanent solutions to this ever-growing problem.

It is particularly gratifying for me to celebrate, promote and help safeguard the accomplishments of El Taller Boricua. I have benefited greatly from knowing this organization. Starting in 1973, while an art history student at New York University's Institute of Fine Arts, I visited frequently their facilities and spent long hours discussing aesthetics, the New York "art scene," and the politics of culture, with the then artistic director, Jorge Soto (1947–1987). His generous and patient sharing of information, his insatiable appetite for knowledge of art, and his concern for El Barrio made a durable impression on me. As director of El Museo, I have received much support and advice from present co-directors, Marcos Dimas and Fernando Salicrup. Their commitment to artists, their ability to turn obstacles into challenges, and their artistic integrity have made it possible for this unique organization to flourish maintaining the excellence of its artistic contributions, and its status as a stable and growing institution for social change in the community of East Harlem.

*El Taller Boricua is often referred to simply as El Taller. Taller is the Spanish word for workshop. Boricua is a name Puerto Ricans often use to name themselves, and derives from the word Borinquen, the name given to the island of Puerto Rico by its native inhabitants, the Taino aborigines. When El Taller incorporated, it was also named in English, hence the name "The Puerto Rican Workshop". Initially, El Taller was called Taller Alma Boricua, the Spanish word "alma" meaning soul. The exhibit title bears this original name, which was first used by the founders in 1970.

Anyta Soto Canino

El Museo del Barrio Newsletter, Sept.-Nov. 1989

■ **OPPOSITE** Carlos Osorio "Signos que Joden", oil over acrylic and sand on canvas, 24" x 12 1/2", 1973.



TALLER ALMA BORICUA

REFLECTING ON TWENTY YEARS OF THE PUERTO RICAN WORKSHOP

■ MARCOS DIMAS

As a gesture of solidarity and union, we adapted and personalized Taino images, which became insignias that symbolically linked us with our ancestral root culture. The elusive aborigine-that mysterious being who had vanished from the face of Borinquen and had receded in our souls...

I remember, in 1969 or 1970, being led out through the back of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, so as to not generate embarrassment or create publicity after we took over Thomas Hoving's office. We followed with countless demonstrations, wayfaring through New York City as art guerrillas, advocating issues like the decentralization of art institutions and the development of programs within museums that would relate to the communities. Following the city-wide action, organized by the Artworkers Coalition to boycott and close all city museums in solidarity with the Kent State University massacre, our group's core membership which included Armando Soto, Adrián García, Martín Rubio, Manuel (Neco) Otero, Carlos Osorio, and myself created El Taller Boricua in East Harlem.

We decided to do this for a variety of reasons, but I think we could all agree that there existed a cultural void in the Puerto Rican community. El Taller became a forum on culture and the arts, a place where artists could share ideas, work space, and materials. As a gesture of solidarity and union, we adapted and personalized Taino images, which became insignias that symbolically linked us with our ancestral root culture. The elusive aborigine-that mysterious being who had vanished from the face of Borinquen and had receded in our souls; the spirit of freedom that had disappeared into a number of myths, folk tales, and anthropological theories-has always been present in our ambience, lurking within our aura, and appearing in the language, mood, nuances, and gestures, as well as the physical appearance of the people. That mythical being, like the phoenix, was being resurrected at the corner of revolution and change.



Our first workshop space was located at the corner of 111th Street and Madison Avenue. It was a four-story building we inherited from the Real Great Society, Inc. We became squatters. Across the street was the headquarters for the Young Lords political party. From this location we started to exhibit in the streets, created and donated works for and to the community, and initiated educational workshops. Later, we were driven out of that building by a series of uncontrollable circumstances, including the shutdown of water service. Then, the last straw was when Con Edison turned off the power for the building, and, as a result, it also turned off, temporarily, our “art to the people” movement.

We moved to our second location on Second Avenue between 110th and 111th street. El Taller Boricua became a multifaceted endeavor, fostering appreciation for our natural culture and supporting our collaborators. There we were, drawing spiritual and abstract concepts from African, Native American, and other traditions, assimilating authentic forms that flourished without the benefit of “European history.” American art has had an affair with what some refer to, or classify as, anthropological art-whose examples range from earthworks, like Robert Smithson’s Spiral Jetty, which are reminiscent of Pre-Columbian earth carving, stretching for miles in the deserts of South America, to the sanitized graffiti, which simulates hieroglyphics or codices, drawn with chalk by Keith Haring in the catacombs of the New York City subway system.

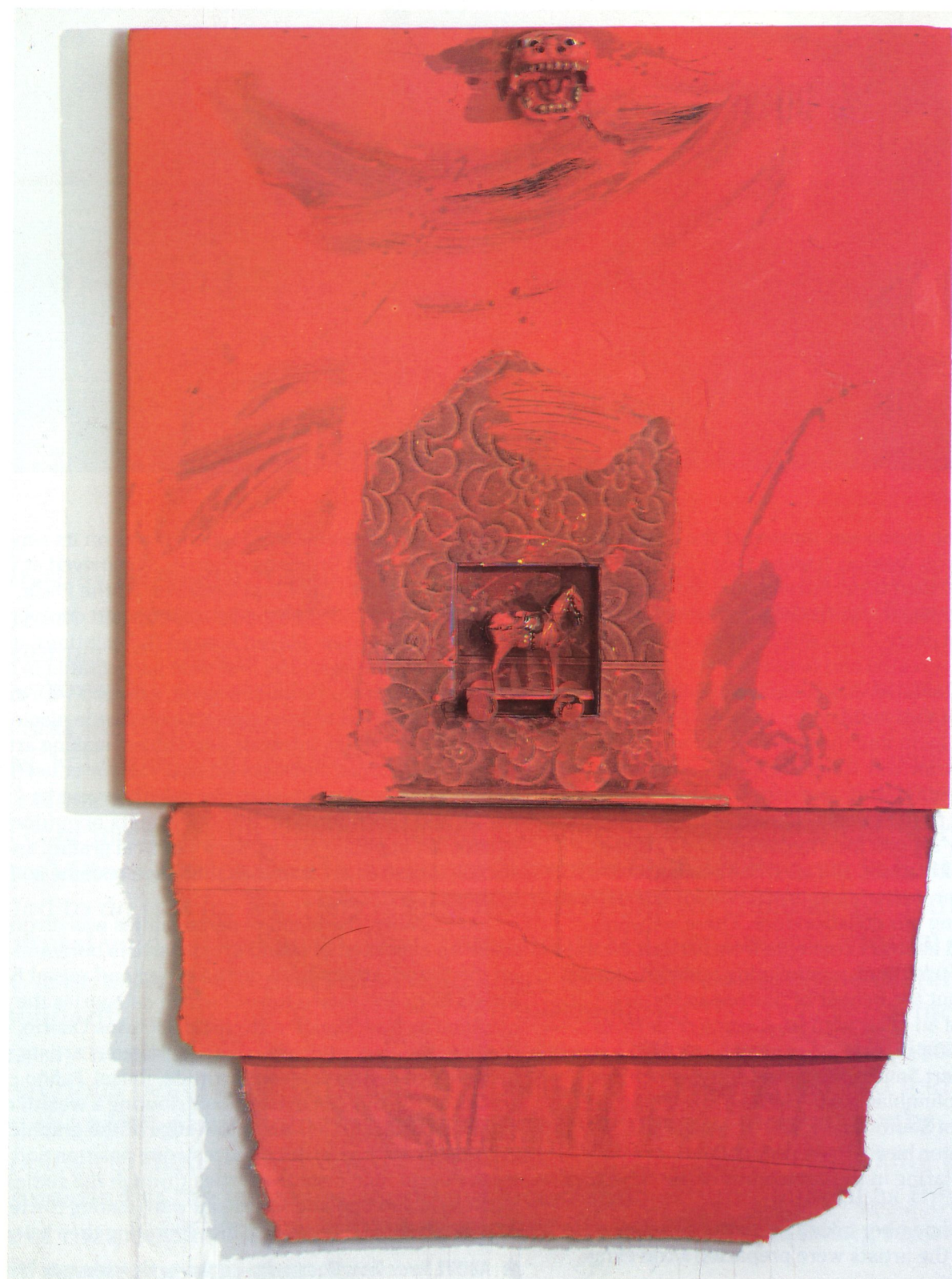
Looking back, I remember taking art to the people. Outside the building the artists were preparing a traveling

exhibition. The vehicle was loaded, it was on its way, this time, to the South Bronx community. We arrived at what was then referred to as the Plaza Betances. At the Plaza, an outdoor exhibit unfolded to the fascination and curiosity of the community. Children played around the paintings, and we felt that the people for the first time participated in an artistic experience. To us, the event, charged with emotion, was the revelation of an ethnic art experience placing art in the center of human interests and values, making art accessible to the people. This was art as a tool for education, art as part of a social movement. We saw the event as a forerunner of, and contributor to, the movements of outdoor art events, art in public places, sociopolitical graffiti, and other socially oriented art activities that have become so familiar in these two decades.

At El Taller, the blend of personalities was diverse. The make up consisted of island artists, artists born and raised on the island, artists born on the island and raised here, and artists born and raised here-of which categories the last two qualified as New York Puerto Ricans. Carlos Osorio, one of the island’s more endearing and courageous artists, shared his sense of dedication and fortitude. Rafael Tufiño came across as the old Zen master, contributing a wealth of experience, discipline, and knowledge of the graphic arts.

Poster Art had maintained a strong position and popularity in Puerto Rico from the forties through the sixties. Silkscreen and lino and woodcuts were among the most popular graphic techniques. Incorporating their talents in

■ **ABOVE** Marcos Dimas silkscreen printing at Madison Ave. location in the 1970’s



the service of social and educational advancement, artists fulfilled a creative and national need. Poster art was used to announce festivals, plays, films, and exhibitions, to illustrate books and magazines, and to serve other social and educational functions. Island artists also used the mediums for fine art work and for political advocacy. Following in that tradition, from its inception in 1970, El Taller has maintained a graphic workshop.

The tradition also continued as we moved to 1538 Madison Avenue to a spacious loft, with "fire in our eyes." Homegrown and handmade mythologies were forged with the images of Puerto Rican patriots Pedro Albizu Campos and Ramón Emeterio Betances. Lurking in the shadows were Cofresí, Agueybaná, Guarionex, Yuisa, and many more icons that lived on the fringe of our political reality. We were evolving from colonial assimilation to a rebirth of identity. We thought we were going to change the world. Poetry and music screamed out from the walls of El Taller, creating a place to park your mind.

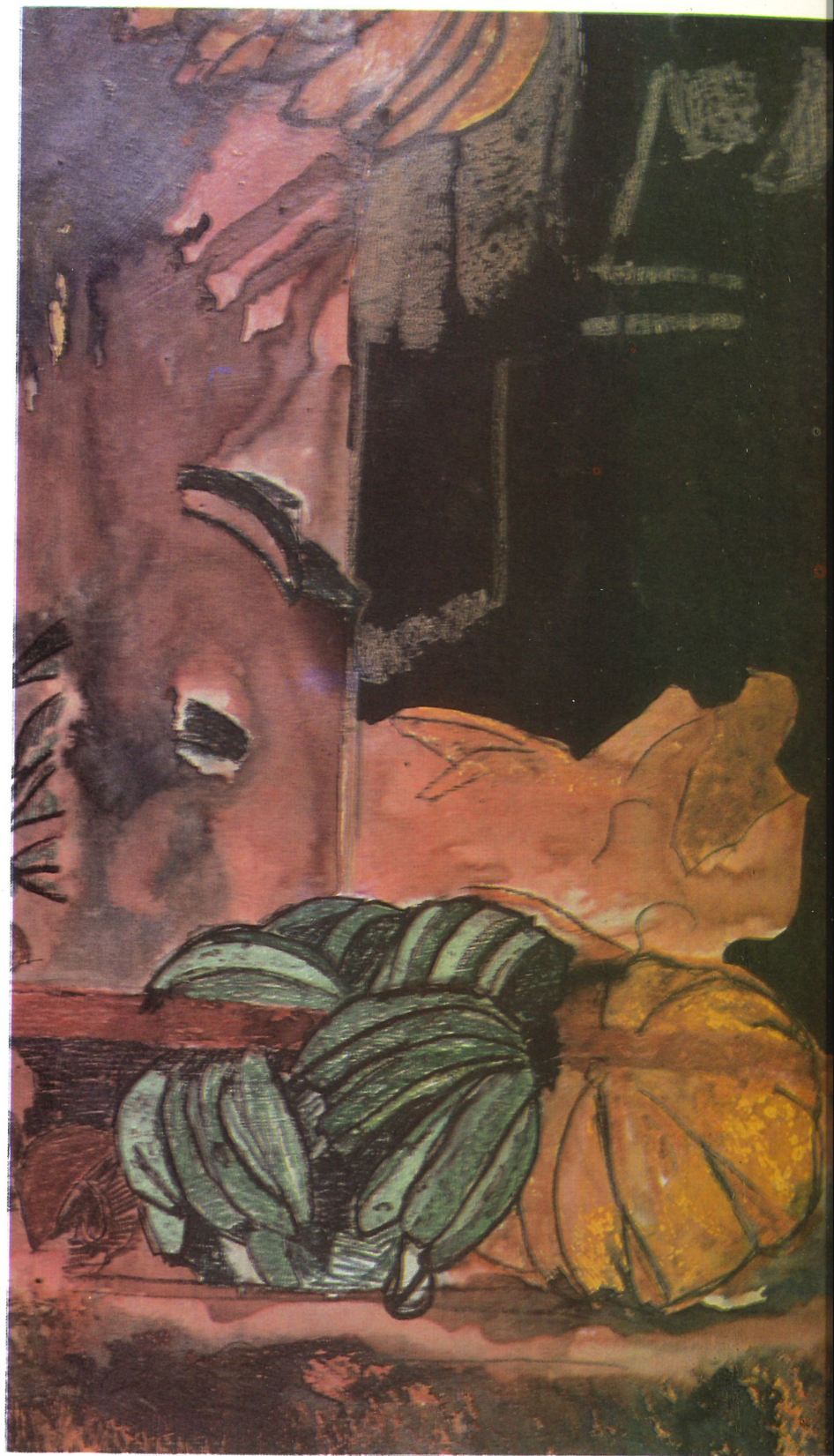
El Taller has always served as a springboard for emerging artists, continually maintaining a sense of exploration with mediums, materials, and concepts. The underlying current of the eclectic body of work created there has been a combination of searching, and a stubborn refusal to lose our identity. We also refused to be classified in "isms" or to be rediscovered every few years by a new crop of liberal critics. Visual art at its best is nonverbal, non-narrative communication, retinal literature that requires us to learn to look and see by feeling.

We started with these goals, among many others: to awake in our neighborhoods the love for Puerto Rican art and culture; to stimulate and develop social and artistic conscience, common conscience; to train and encourage young artists, poets, and musicians to develop their artistic talents and, if interested, to apply their arts to promote pride and community.

Developing conscience on an artistic level is a far more strenuous endeavor than doing so on a political level. From within our subconscious, the deepest and loneliest corner of our minds, a low hum of questions grows louder. Are we satisfied with staying in our cultural place? Will we be fed art by the traditional umbilical cord from the island, or settle for the artistic expression that has grown on us from leftover ghettos? Have we succeeded in bringing art to the community? Does the community want art, can you feed the masses with it? To paraphrase an old revolutionary colleague: "So you want to be an artist? Eat paint!"

■ **OPPOSITE** Nestor Otero "Jinete", construction 75 1/4" x 51 1/4" x 7", 1988.

RIGHT Nitza Tufiño "Bodegon", acrylics, charcoal, pastel, and polyurethane on masonite, 48" x 28", 1974.





And more questions emerge. Is it moral for an artist to travel a personal quest, to reach the soul, while outside of their personalized exorcism their families suffer; crackheads are killing babies without remorse; the poor and the elderly are being displaced by gentrification; politicians and public officials are outright scandalous; AIDS, homelessness, drugs, abuse to animals, and the destruction of the environment worsens?

The socially conscious artist struggles with decisions. Should we lay down our pencils, brushes, cameras and computers and become more directly involved, or should we disregard it all and reach for the illusive "mega-buck." Nevertheless, dedication and struggle is the artist's mandate. The artist has to pursue both self-gratification and social activism. People do not live by bread alone; the artist has to make a better world. Artists are seen as distant by the masses—we seem self-indulgent and the communists denounce the artists as petit bourgeois. Picasso was a devout communist, and as far as I know he didn't contribute any of his wealth to any causes. Anyway, he did leave a great amount of good pictures.

To paraphrase Francisco Oller: "The artist, like the writer, has the obligation to be of worth, their work must be a book that teaches, it must serve to better the human condition, it must castigate evil and exalt virtue." Francisco Oller, (1833–1917), came back to Puerto Rico after participating in the formative years of the Impressionist Movement

in France, during which time he helped the father of modern art, Paul Cézanne, with his drawing technique. He returned to Puerto Rico, far away from the art scene, where he created a school of art free to everyone and executed a series of paintings that contributed to the abolition of slavery. Oller chose to risk international fame and success for the sake of creating beauty and consciousness.

The New York Puerto Rican aesthetic has developed in its own climate. It has been tempered by, among other things, the experience of living in a marginal society; of speaking a hybrid of both languages, each broken, and not belonging completely with either. The poets, dramatists, musicians, and visual artists, being on the edge of society, could see both sides, the marginal and the mainstream. Even those who had formal educations, and most did, reverted to a fresh state of mind. Works that at first appear rare, unfinished, simple, and shallow, upon inspection are transformed into profound subtleties with rich variations of color and content. They evoke a sense of an inborn symbolic meaning, correct and accurate. This aesthetic was part of the move to reject the mainstream currents, and at the same time retain a high standard in craft. Our group, creating with nontraditional elements, produced what was called processed works-assemblages of recycled junk in which found objects and cast-off items become icons. Significant in the processed work was the sequence of symbols, the relationships among objects, the reference to time, the spiritual

transformation. During the process of creation, each piece served as a talisman, a means to travel into the subconscious, connecting with other times. In processed works the original intent of art, to transform ideas into visual objects, became secondary to the act of creation. The final product of this ritual coexists along with hightech modernism.

We sensed it and felt it! The movement can be compared with surrealism, but spontaneous, without group calculations or position manifestos. The struggle has been interesting and entertaining, and at times too serious. It also has taken its share of casualties. We have lost many artists in mid-career or before they were recognized and rewarded. Within the present system the artist is doomed to repetition: "The only good artist is the dead artist." Unlike the old ways where art was an integral part of life now it is an integral part of commercialism. The New York Boricua art scene is being revitalized, after twenty years or so. Those of us remaining and the new generation will emerge stronger. The time will come when all artists will be able to cleanse themselves of middlemen and mediocrity and be masters of their creations.

When all the smoke clears, and the literary council of the future starts to publish its art findings, they will come to the conclusion that the art of the collective and social conscience, and the art that reached the masses to help effect change is true, important work.

■ **OPPOSITE** Jorge Soto "Untitled", Acrylic on canvas, 57 1/2" x 115", 1981.



■ **ABOVE** Rafael Tufino at work, 1970.



AESTHETIC CONSIDERATIONS

RAFAEL MONTAÑEZ ORTIZ

Paper read on October 21, 1989 at the Taller Boricua Exhibition Colloquium

This twentieth-anniversary exhibition of El Taller Alma Boricua, the workshop of the Puerto Rican soul, asks many questions: What purpose does art exist for? For whom does art exist? Is there such a thing as a mainstream in art? What is the relationship of race and class and art? In the culture of the West, is there such a thing as modern and contemporary art that is distinct from the larger world history of native and folk art? What relationship does race and class have to the larger world history of art? What distinguishes the role of patriarchy from matriarchy in all this? These and many more questions are posed and need to be answered to clear the air of the great hoax perpetuated by the institutionalization of racism by Eurocentric European and American historians and art historians. It is this hoax that El Museo del Barrio and El Taller Alma Boricua rightfully challenge.

■ **OPPOSITE** Fernando Salicrup "Despierta Boricua", acrylic on canvas, 75 1/4" x 44 1/2", 1977.



Bigotry is the heart of the matter. Artists of color, cut-off from their authentic artistic roots, disenfranchised by class and racial bigotry, have always, because of the great hoax, approached the bigoted art world—no less than the bigoted larger world—defensively. Miseducated and misinformed, believing the hoax and defeated by the hoax, people and artists of color have been dying mentally, spiritually, and physically, deprived of the authenticating dream.

The alchemy of creation, the authenticating dream is the art that begins all things. Without it, nothing would or could exist. We could not imagine anything without art. Art is our alchemy of being and imagining, and is most profoundly evident in our dreams. It is dreams that authenticate a person – and a people, as they are rooted in their authenticating history. Deprived of our dream, we go mad, we stop existing.

It took the intellectual integrity of such people as Joseph Campbell and Maria Gimbutas and some thirty-five years of their research and publications, to finally unshackle our minds of patriarchal Eurocentrism, so that in 1989 the intellectual rhetoric in art finally includes cultural pluralism. But cultural pluralism does not speak to the art historical facts that are the roots and initial solutions of the form and content of all that is called classical, modern and contemporary art; they were all found in the form and content of the ancient art of the Americas, Africa and Asia long before they began to appear in the art of ancient Europe. Cultural pluralism in art without parity in the art historical context is just so much “lip service”. Such notions as primitive, pre-historic and folk art need finally to be discarded and replaced with terminology that will at last integrate the art of the root cultures of the people of color throughout the world with the still separatist culture of the West.

But the climate was more separatist back in 1969. Just some 15 years after the beginning of racial desegregation of the “American Dream”, neither cultural nor any kind of pluralism was on the American agenda. Fine Arts and within it, the so-called “mainstream” of art continued in its merry way; misinforming, disinforming, Euro-Caucasian, patriarchal, class-elitist way.

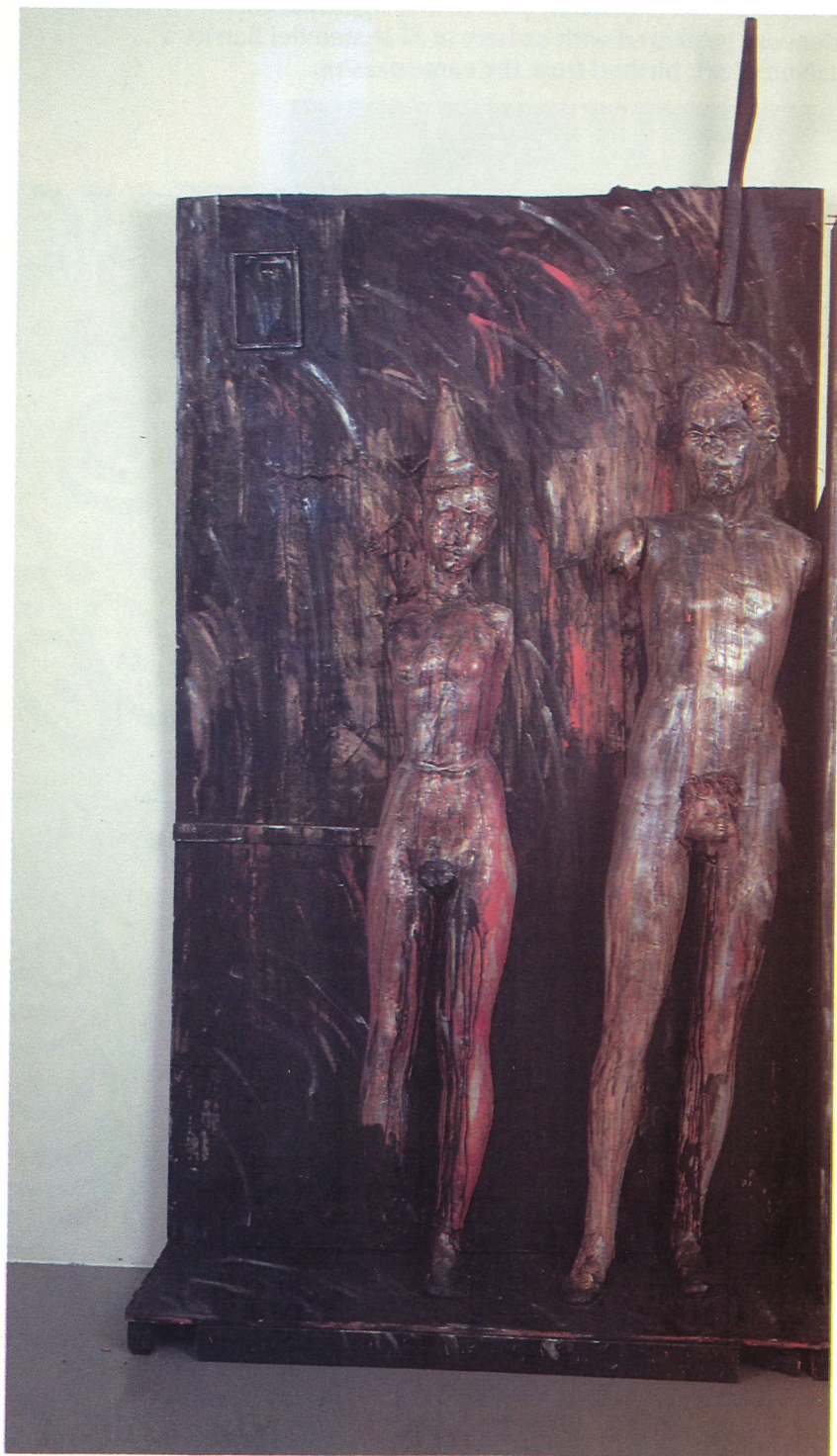
In the early seventies, workshops and museums were founded and run by the underclass, the then called lower class. The poor people of color, sprouted like mushrooms. The most disenfranchised, the underclass of color, for the first time in American history began to redefine themselves in the context of desegregation through its art; giving integrity in its struggle to empower itself. Through the form and content of their art they began to reclaim their authenticating roots and the power of their ability to dream with the authenticating dream.

That is the revolutionary spirit and aesthetic that El Taller Alma Boricua came to share. What its artists consciously and unconsciously joined. It is right that their endeavors be shared with us here at El Museo del Barrio, a museum of art, birthed from the same passion.



■ **OPPOSITE** Rafael Tufiño “Tejedora”, linocut.

RIGHT Jorge Soto, detail, Untitled, 2-color silkscreen monoprint, 19" x 14 1/4", 1972.



■ **ABOVE** Jorge Soto "Tom and Jill", Mixed media, 80" x 60" x 16 1/2", 1982.

S O C I O P O L I T I C A L I M P L I C A T I O N S

L U C Y R L I P P A R D

Paper read October 21, 1989 at the
Taller Boricua Exhibition colloquium

The politics of collaboration and of intercultural coalitions have been one of the great secrets of the last 20 years of contemporary art in New York. Only the participants are aware of the complexities, the triumphs, the failures, the disappointments, and the crucial significance of such ongoing encounters, mergings, dispersions. This is not the time to get into the whole history, and I only know part of it myself, but sooner or later it must be incorporated into the textbooks and catalogues of this city's art history.

My own first acquaintance with the artists of El Taller Boricua was in the late '60s early '70s in the context of the AWC—the Artworkers Coalition, the dissident artists' group that formed in the midst of the anti-

■ **OPPOSITE** Marcos Dimas "Untitled", Oil on Canvas, 80" x 58", 1986.



war movement, but was also concerned with domestic racism and repression. Marcos Dimas was often a spokesperson for the Latino community. The AWC militated, however futilely, for multiracial representation in the city's museums, as well as for artists' representation on the museums' boards of trustees. (You can imagine how far we got with that.) In those days there were very few cross-cultural encounters open to an all-too-focused young white writer totally engrossed in the downtown scene, which was and still is extremely provincial. So taking part in the artworkers' Decentralization Committee—mostly with Black artist Tom Lloyd in South Jamaica—was an eye opener. (The idea was to force the city's museums to spread their artistic wealth out to the boroughs, the barrios; to make storefront branches of those museums in community centers in different neighborhoods, to make the Met share its Pre-Columbian hoardings with the East Harlem community, for instance. You can guess how far we got with that too, but it was a good idea and it still is.

At the same time, of course, Ralph Ortiz was founding El Museo, and he did get incredibly far with that! Several years later, Jorge Soto occasionally participated in PADD—Political Art Documentation/Distribution—often as a relentless thorn in our well-intentioned flesh. And Marcos Dimas spoke for El Taller at one of our Second Sunday forums. For the most part, however, it seems that El Taller did not concern itself with educating the white left or the downtown art scene, but concentrated proudly on its own community. The rest of us learned from their example, so that by the time cross-cultural collaboration began to blossom in the '80s, the political community was not entirely dumb about the contributions of El Taller Boricua and other such collectives around the city. Rafael Ortiz's brief manifesto expresses it well:

"For the underclass, art must become the means of collective and personal survival and regeneration. Central to the form and content of such art must be an ethnocentrism that recovers ethnic cultural traditions and applies them in a personal alchemy to create a fine arts proper to the underclass, rooted in the artist's native culture, authenticating and revealing the community to itself."

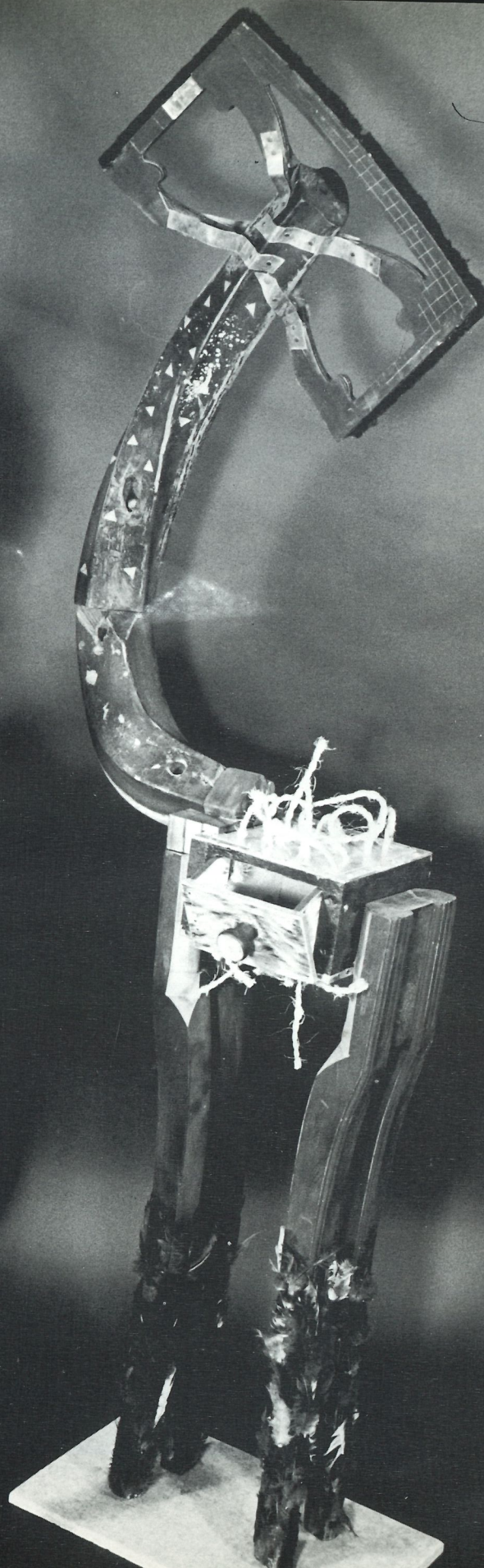
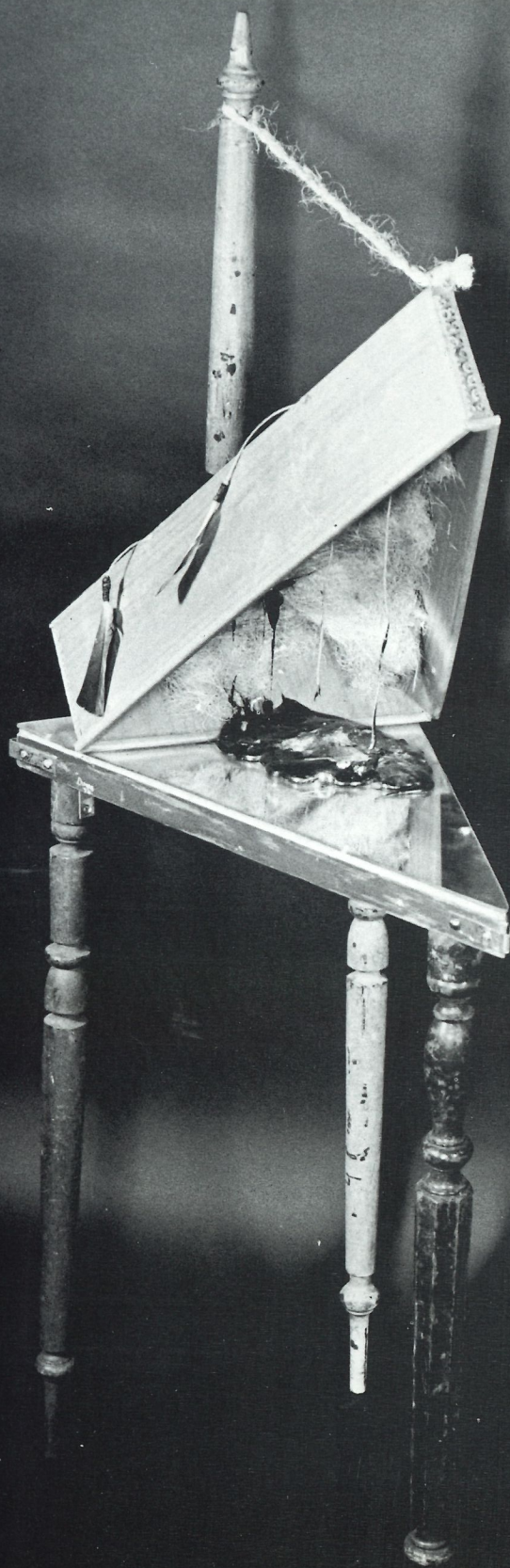
I'd like to spend the rest of my time addressing this question of a double ethnocentrism and its social ramifications for cultural survival. The term ethnocentrism is

usually used in a derogatory sense to parallel white racism. But there is the other, positive meaning—a mirror image of the dominant culture, exemplified by the very diverse work of the artists in El Taller. Throughout this show there is an ebb and flow of symbolism that goes back and forth in time and space, emphasizing what Marcos Dimas has called the "symbolic link with our ancestral culture...with the elusive aborigine, that spirit of freedom who had vanished from Borinquen but resided in our souls in the form of myth, story and anthropology, present in our ambience and reappearing through language, mood, nuance, and gesture."

We live in a paradoxical moment not only of expanding polarization among racial groups, but also of tantalizing openness to new ideas about the hemisphere's multicultural future. It will come to a head in 1992 as we try to rewrite the history since Columbus' accidental invasion of the Americas. The context doesn't exist for a nice seamless master narrative, and I always keep in mind the relational, unfixed models I learned from feminism.

It is no coincidence that so many of the most interesting artists working today come from culturally mixed backgrounds, or are exiles, immigrants, refugees. Without minimizing the economic and psychological toll of racism, and without exaggerating the strengths that have resulted from survival, it is still possible to recognize the depth of the contributions of Latin, African, Asian and Native American cultures to the so-called mainstream. So-called Ethnic artists in North America are forced to acquire a profound knowledge of both the dominant culture and of their own often perplexingly mixed cultures, even as they live precariously between the two—or among the many. El Taller artists are part of the "polyphonous discourse" that ethnographer James Clifford and others have been calling for, operating from a base of deculturation and rediscovery across class and race, abstraction and representation. They are aesthetically bilingual in a world where the backward xenophobia of English only gains ground daily. They are culturally disturbing in a time of simplistic patriotism, alienated from the Western history taught in our schools, but exposing the truly Western history of Nuestra America buried beneath the rubble of colonialism.

■ **OPPOSITE** Marcos Dimas "Sprit Traps", assemblages, 1974.





There has been surprise expressed from time to time over the years that the work of El Taller is not more overtly "political". It is only in the last decade that the expansive Latino concept of the political has been tentatively understood by the mainstream. The Amerindian respect for the spiritual, and the historical necessity for a certain hermeticism are certainly factors here. Modernist or postmodernist visual strategies are the natural choices for all artists living and working today in the West, and the assumption that Latino, Native, or African American artists should be restricted to styles related to their original backgrounds is racist. On the other hand, the mistrust of lived experience, the assumption that any reference to land, place, history, religion, family, and aboriginal cultures is some kind of insult to artists of color because it locks them into stereotypes constitutes another kind of bias. The presence of Pre-Columbian imagery, memory, ritual and ceremony in Latino art cannot be tossed out of practice because theory demands it. These are what Chicana artist and scholar Amalia Mesa Bains calls "nutrient" subjects, nourishing the present with the past.

Advocates of a cultural democracy, of a respect for difference and a wider definition of art and its audiences, are often taunted with the specter of "the lowest common denominator." Yet art does not become "worse" as it spreads out to become more accessible to more people. In fact, the real low ground lies in the falsely beneficent notion of a so-called universal art that effectively smoothes over all the rough edges, all the differences, but remains detached from the lives of most people. So the artists of El Taller Boricua are cultural activists even when they do not make pictures directly of the atrocities in Guatemala and El Salvador, the United States attempted usurpation of sovereignty in Nicaragua, the stolen elections in Mexico, the occupation of Vieques, the movement for Puerto Rican Independence and the Puerto Rican political prisoners in U.S. jails.

I have to at least mention the politics of Quality—I hate the word and its classist assumptions. It's the core of racism in the arts, as it supposedly transcends boundaries but is identifiable only by those in power. According to this lofty view, racism has nothing to do with art; Quality will prevail;

so-called minorities just haven't quite got it yet. This narrow and monolithic notion of Quality has been an effective bludgeon on the side of homogeneity. Cross-cultural perception, on the other hand, demands that repudiation of unquestioned socially received criteria and the excavation of personal/communal taste that may differ broadly from place to place, group to group. So long as everything is seen in terms of a center and some peripheries, or margins, cultural racism will be unavoidable and curiously unapproachable. It is veiled by the rhetoric of "democracy" and a liberal "multiculturalism" that is virtually a fad these days and is more about paternalistic tolerance than about understanding difference, working to make the unfamiliar familiar, and acknowledging the enormous diversity within diversity.

So there are two sides to the question of ethnocentrism. From the side of the white leftist or liberal, it is absolutely necessary to understand that overemphasis from the outside on static identity and so-called "authenticity" can lead to false representations that freeze non-European cultures into an anthropological present or an archaeological past, denying their heirs a modern identity or political reality. There have been several insidious tendencies within the art and scholarship of the mainstream, and sometimes the Left. One is to pillage the imagery and content of other cultures in the service of a neo-primitivism that does not respect the contemporary art of the peoples whose pasts seem so interesting. Another has been to isolate the "Other" on a romanticizing pedestal and to denigrate as derivative all art by Latino artists that doesn't look Latino enough. Another has been to force work by artists of color into a western hegemonic analysis posing as beneficently anti-hegemonic, but often arrogantly ignorant of the cultures it intends to deliver from bondage. (No white critic is fully free of these false representations; I've certainly been guilty of all of them at one time or another.)

From the point of view of El Taller Boricua, as I understand it, we have a proudly chosen ethnocentrism that is nourished by the vestiges of Taino culture (with its Janus-faced imagery so appropriate to a cross-cultural enterprise). The illusory warmth of the melting pot has been rejected. Groups like El Taller have offered sanctuary to ideas, images, and values swept away in the mainstream. The figure remains an important component in the art, validated by its

mythical roots as well as its contemporary outreach to real issues and people here and now. Victor Zamudio Taylor has observed that "from the pre-Hispanic and African to the new world baroque and popular culture, the body is a sign; a metaphor and allegory for the wounds inflicted on the corpus of our culture from the first encounter. Yet it is the battered body and the mutilated corpus of a shared tradition where difference and specificity as well as resistance and change has and is to be grounded...The fragmented body is a sign that a cure is at work."

It has long been obvious that self definition must precede social action, and that one of the artist's major social roles is to help her or his community name themselves, and make images that represent themselves. This is a reciprocal process. As Michael M.J. Fischer has said "ethnicity is something reinvented and reinterpreted in each generation by each individual, and it's often something quite puzzling to the individual, something over which he or she lacks control. It is something that emerges in full, often liberating flower, only through struggle."

Every time someone with whom we live—in the personal and the public sense—redefines themselves, we respond by our own self re-evaluation. James Baldwin wrote something years ago that is still, sadly, all too true: He said: "So where we are now is that a whole country of people believe I'm a Nigger, and I don't, and the battle's on! Because if I am not what I've been told I am, then it means that you're not what you thought you were either. And that is the crisis."

Art with both spiritual depth and socio-political meaning is for the most part homeless in this society, often separated by class and intention from artworld models. Politics and the spirit are both fundamentally moving forces, acts of faith. If we are not moved to communicate and create change, if we stand still, the status quo is our reward. El Taller artists assume a dynamic rather than a passive relationship to society, and the cross-cultural process—of which El Taller Boricua is an important part—exposes contradictions that cannot and should not be resolved. It demands the repudiation of unquestioned socially received criteria. The conventional notion of good taste with which artists in the dominant culture are educated is based on an illusion of social order that is no longer possible, nor desirable, to believe in. We now look at art in the context of incoherence and disor-

der—a far more difficult task than following the prevailing roles. El Taller Boricua has always taken this hard path, layering the personal and the political, the mythical and the historical, the universal and the specific, minding its own business in the best sense by making fine art as a model for the NuYorican community. New York is the U.S. microcosm of the Caribbean—a crucible of models for a respectful mixing of "races" and cultures and esthetics. El Taller Boricua has been a pioneer in this struggle.

La Lucha Continua

A few passages included here are taken from Ms. Lippard's forthcoming book, *Mixed Blessings: New American Art and the Cross-Cultural Process*, to be published by Pantheon Books in the Fall of 1990.

■ **OPPOSITE** Manuel Vega, "Musica de Cámara", poster, pen & ink.



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MAY 4 IREM POVENTUD, SOPRANO
PABLO BOISSEN, PIANO

MAY 11 GEORGE MORALES, CLARINET
MAY 18 SAMUEL PEREZ, PIANIST
MAY 25 EVA DE LA O, SOPRANO
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“ *El Taller grew out of a fertile ground that cried for inner and outer recognition.* ”

The turbulent sixties saw the sowing of seeds that have now borne beautiful fruits of creativity shown at this “gathering.” I call it a gathering because it is a mingling of work and friends who met at a focal point in my life eighteen years ago when I first began this quest for identity.

Afros, dashikis, readings, and Lords served to filter spontaneity into the existential, philosophical stream of consciousness whose ferment produced self-awareness. “Brown-eyed Girls” “Under the Boardwalk” doing the “African Twist” in “Spanish Harlem” energized us. Pedro Pietri was our Shakespeare, Sandra Maria Esteves, our Siren, and the pain of passion drove us to ask the still-unanswerable questions that shaped our insatiable thirst for “us.”

I stood on this landscape, this little piece of Puerto Rico that to me is called El Barrio and knew that as artists, as expressive communicators for this community in pain, we had to build the institutions that would afford us credibility, support, and insular embraces of creative feedback that would propel us into the fabric of society.

Then I met Jorge Soto. On the stage of controlled movement, where subways were the canvas for the cries of young artists, Jorge and I reestablished a boyhood friendship that took me into El Taller, an evolving workshop of artists that through their torturous obsessions wanted to make a mark on this city.

Communication, community, and collective became El Taller. Work mirrored existence. Raw energy manifested itself in the spiritual. This evolved into a growing process toward the realization of self that engulves a technique of layered detail. Computers now replace my formative acrylics. Laser printers have superseded silkcreens. Technology has arrived. But it has enhanced and embraced the seeking of growth and progress that is El Taller Boricua.

El Taller grew out of a fertile ground that cried for inner and outer recognition. It was spawned from the womb of need that wanted to be heard, that wanted to be known, that wanted to be. Today, El Taller is nourished by the grains of advocacy, by the milk of mentoring, and by the knowledge that only we can leave as a legacy to our children. El Taller Boricua is building housing for artists. It is creating cul-

tural centers for children who must learn about their heritage and their identity before they join the roving gangs of “wildings.” It is also establishing stepping stones for younger artists who need a place to start from and resources to share.

The people “gathered” in this retrospective are all pioneers of this community. They are people who through their own methods embody the spirit of vision, of communication, of involvement in our existence that is our reason for being—our reason for loving. And only through this love do we find who it is that we are.

EXPRESSIONS & VISIONS

statement

FERNANDO SALICRUP



EL TALLER BORICUA

Activities: OPEN HOUSE/EXHIBITION of Taller's new location. Works of the following artists will be displayed: Jorge Soto, Marcos Dimas, Fernando Salicrup, Wanda Quinones, Gilberto Hernández, and apprentices of the Artist/Mentor Program. Exhibit Coordinator: Jorge Soto. Exhibit opening Friday, March 23 at 6 p.m. A Special Commemorative Portfolio,

a limited edition of 25, consisting of 8 original new SERIGRAPHS, shall be available for purchase valued at \$250 per set and suitable for Institutional exhibition purposes. This is an opportunity to visit Taller Boricua's new location at the East Harlem Arts & Education Complex and view the first Art Show in the Galeria.

TALLER BORICUA: 1 East 104th Street, New York, N.Y. 10029,

For further information, Contact: Rosanne 831-4333.

ARTISTS IN EXHIBITION

TALLERALMABORICUA

REFLECTING ON TWENTY YEARS OF THE PUERTO RICAN WORKSHOP

■ **OPPOSITE** Poster announcing El Taller's relocation to 1 E104th Street.

RAMON ABDIAS GONZALEZ

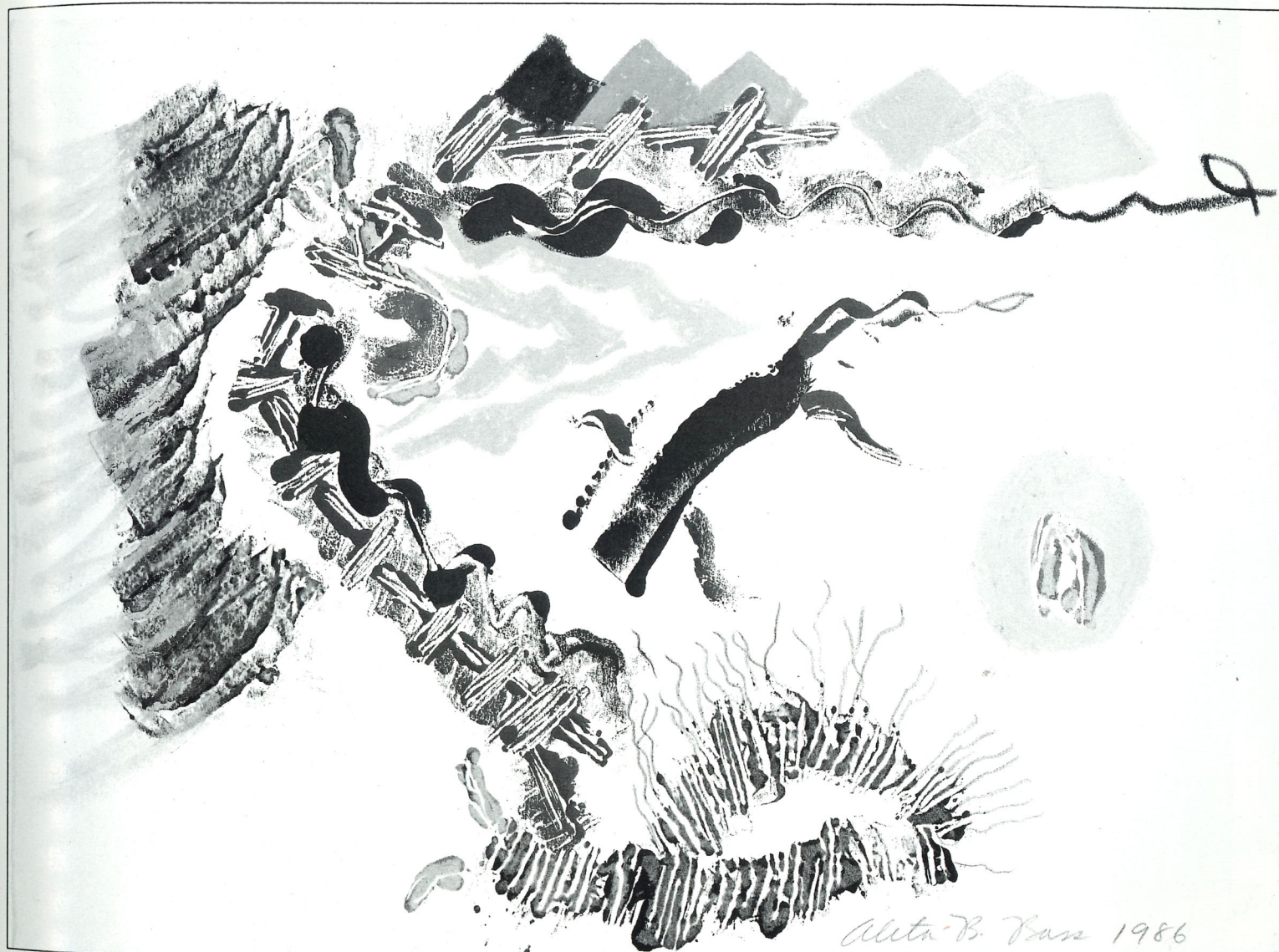
Born in New York City in 1948. He has exhibited his work in solo exhibitions at the New Rican Village Cultural Center and the Galeria Morivivi in New York. He has worked as art instructor for the Bronx Council on the Arts, curator at the New Rican Village Cultural Center and overall consultant of Puerto Rican art.



"Guazipungo", 1975

ALETA BASS

Born in Washington in 1953. She received a B.F.A. degree from the Massachusetts College of Art and a Masters degree from the Pratt Institute in Brooklyn. She has had solo exhibitions at the Chemical Bank Gallery, the Bronx Museum for the Arts, the Grant Art Gallery and the Corner Gallery at the World Trade Center in New York.



"Untitled", 1986

RAFAEL COLON MORALES

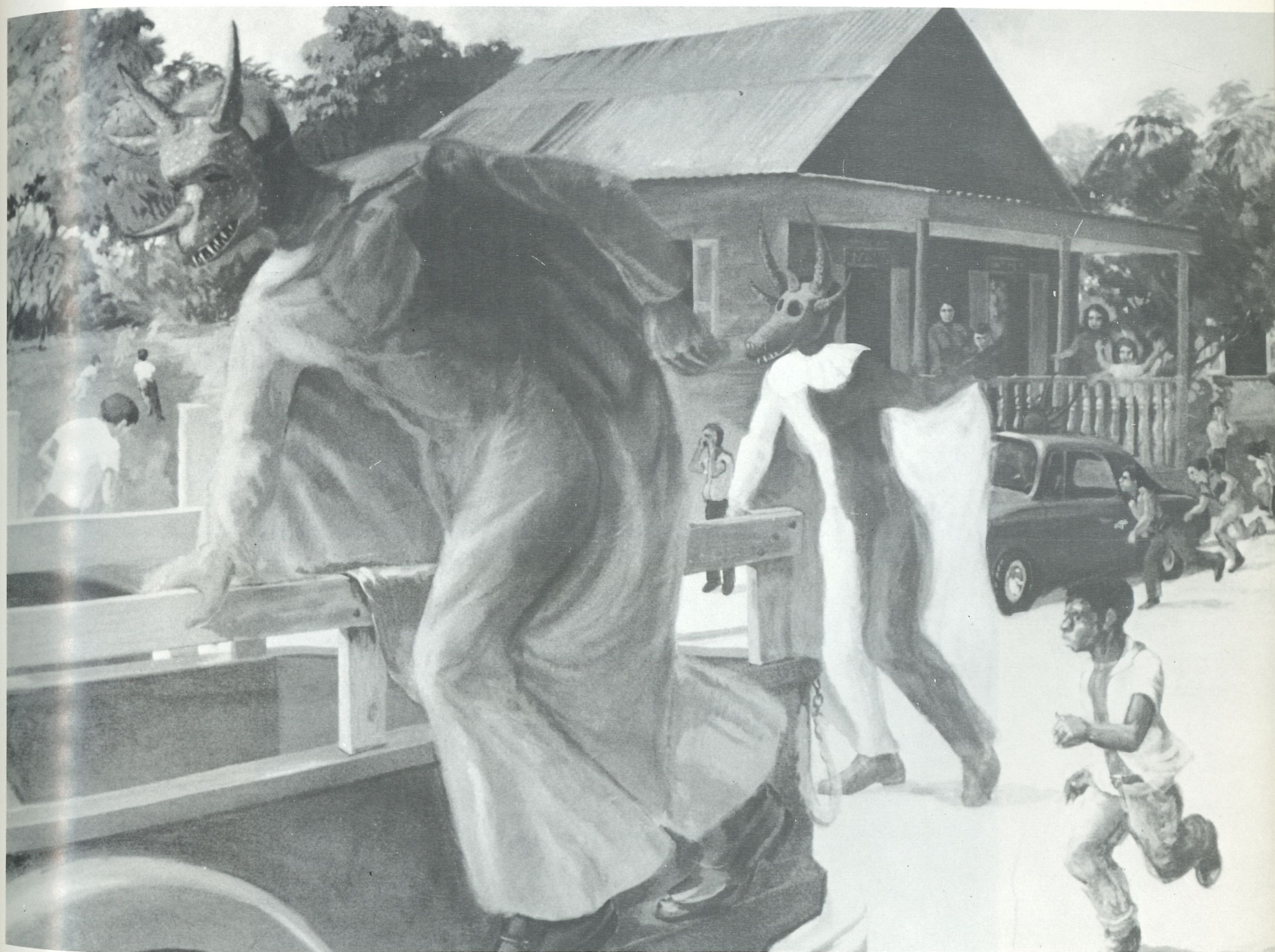
Born in Bronx, New York. He received a B.A. degree from the University of Puerto Rico and a M.A. degree from the American University in Washington, D.C. He has taught drawing and painting at the University of Puerto Rico, Brooklyn College, and SUNY at Albany. He has also worked as an independent writer and curator. His solo exhibitions have been showcased at Cayman Gallery, Galeria Tito, and El Museo del Barrio.



"Hueso 1" 1973

FELIX CORDERO

Born in Ponce, Puerto Rico in 1931. He attended the School of Visual Art, the Art Students League, as well as the New School of Social Research. He has exhibited as a solo artist at the Galeria Morivivi, Hostos Community College Gallery, Galeria Oller, and El Museo del Barrio in New York as well as at the Westminster Gallery at Bloomfield College, in New Jersey.



"Fiesta de Mascaras" 1986

MARCOS DIMAS

Born in Cabo Rojo in 1943, is a printer, graphic artist, film-maker and a graduate of the School of Visual Arts in New York City. He is one of the founding members of El Taller Boricua in 1970, and is presently its co-director. He has taught workshops in art for the New York City Public School System in New York. His extensive exhibition record includes solo and group shows at the Brooklyn Museum, Cayman Gallery, the Center for Inter-American Relations, Dept. of Cultural Affairs, El Museo del Barrio, Exit Art and the New Museum of Contemporary Art, Museum of Contemporary Hispanic Art, and the Bronx Museum.



"Pariah" 1971-72

SANDRA MARIA ESTEVES

Born in the Bronx, New York in 1948. A graphic artist and performer, she received a B.F.A. degree in Graphics and Theater Communications from the Pratt Institute in New York. She is recipient of a fellowship in poetry from the New York Foundation for the Arts and is currently director of the African-Caribbean Poetry Theater. She has exhibited at Galeria Morivivi, Eventos Gallery, and El Taller Boricua.



"La Sangre Llama" 1972

SHARON FRAZIER

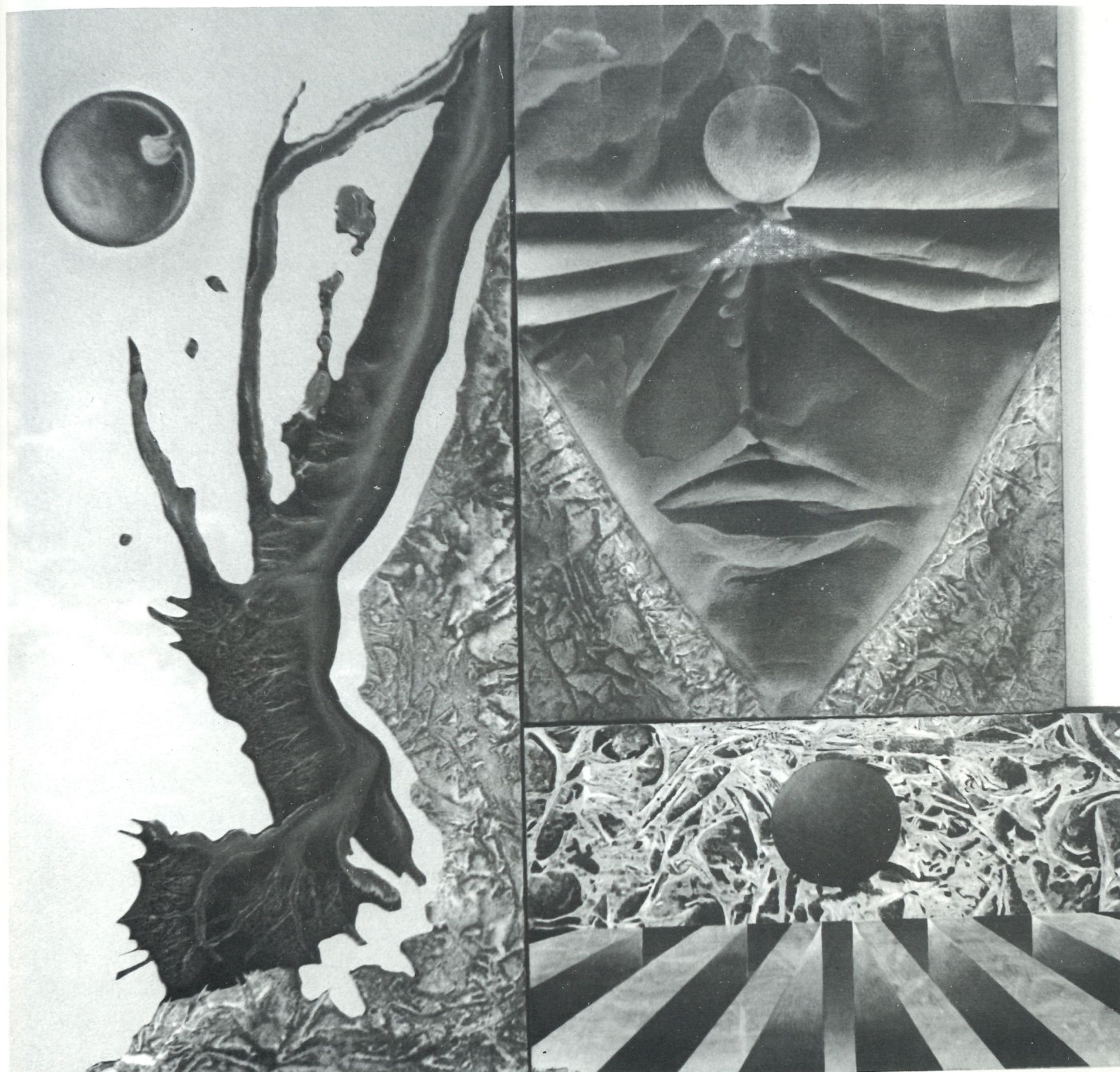
Born in Baltimore, Maryland in 1954. She received a B.F.A. degree from Louisiana State University, where she majored in printmaking. She also pursued studies at the Art Students League in New York. Her most recent solo show was held at the Burgundy Gallery in New York. She has also participated in national and international exhibitions of printmaking.



"Foz do Iguaso" 1989

ADRIAN GARCIA

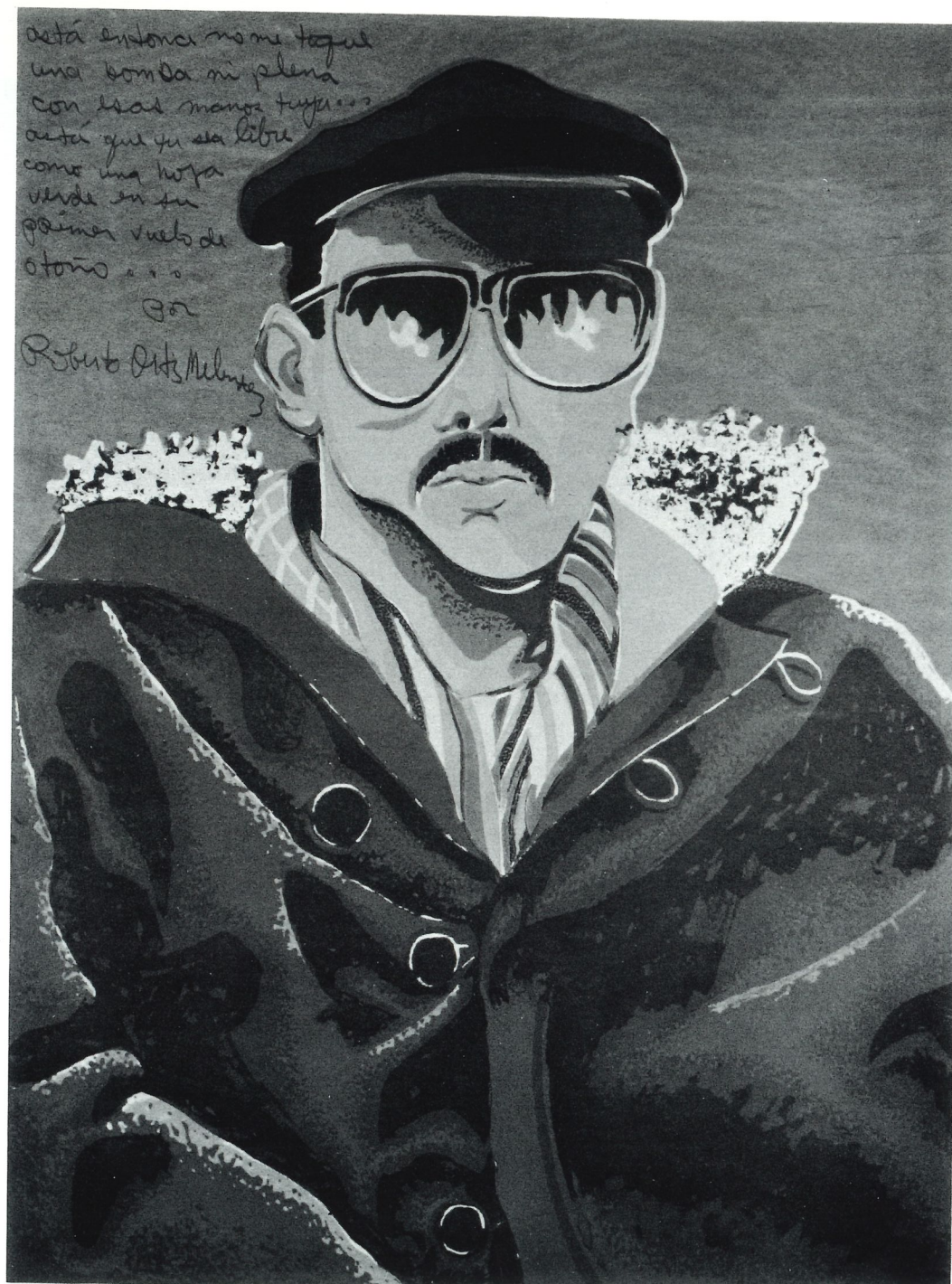
Born in San Germán, Puerto Rico in 1948. He is one of the founding members of El Taller Boricua and a contributor to the founding of El Museo del Barrio. He has pursued studies at the School of Visual Arts, and is currently working as a printer in the Lithography Workshop, Atelier Ettinger. He has also exhibited as a solo artist in La Fortaleza in San Juan, Puerto Rico.



"El Canto" 1974

GILBERTO HERNANDEZ (1945–1985)

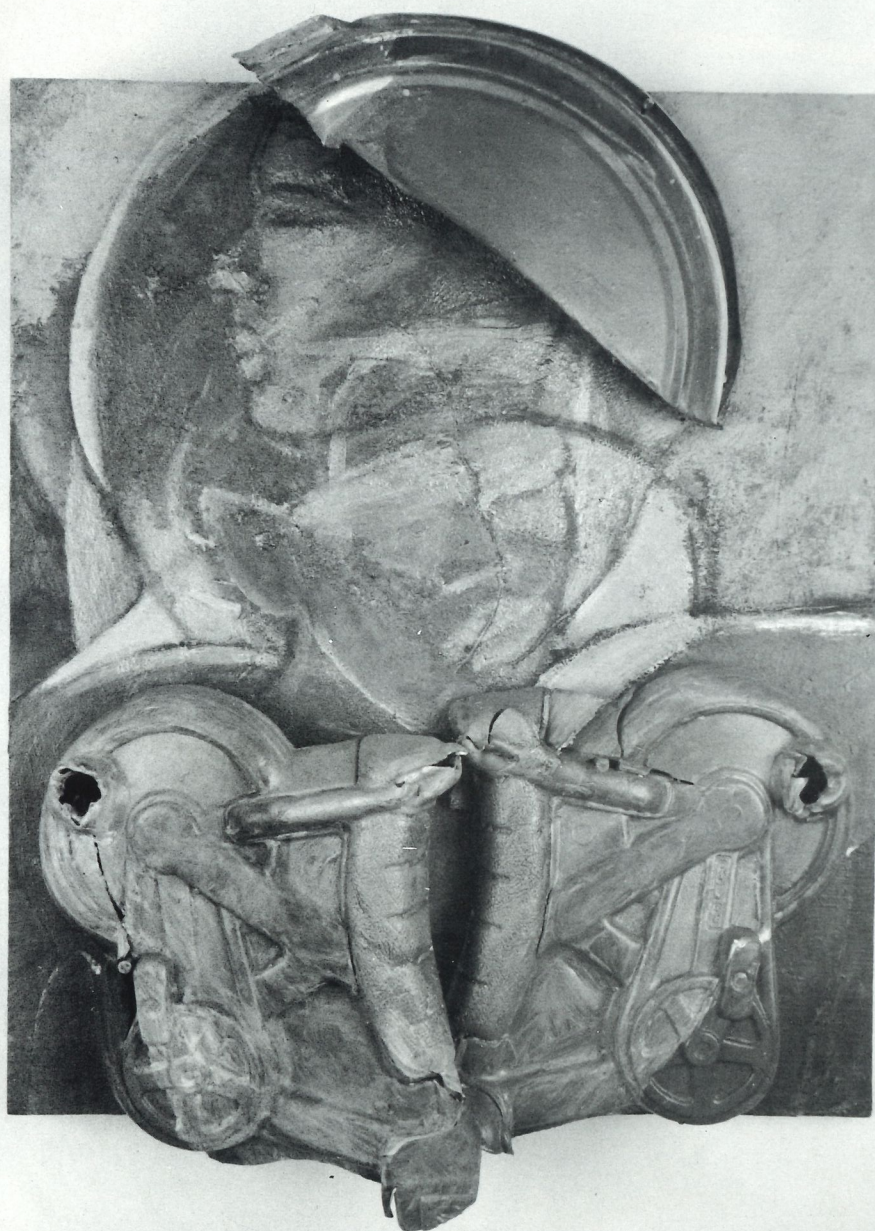
Born in Santurce, Puerto Rico. He studied at the Institute of Puerto Rican Culture and worked in various workshops in the area. He has exhibited at the Latin American Graphics Biennial in San Juan, the Colibri Gallery and El Museo del Barrio, among other cultural institutions.



"Plants" 1974

MIRIAM HERNANDEZ

Born in Santurce, Puerto Rico in 1947. She holds a B.F.A. degree from Queens College and a M.F.A. from the Graduate School of Painting at the Maryland Institute. She has had solo exhibitions at El Taller Boricua and has participated in numerous group shows at Kenkeleba Gallery and the Museum of Contemporary Hispanic Art in New York as well as at the Arts Tower in Baltimore. She has also worked as a curator and consultant of Latin art.



"Second Thoughts" 1989

LEE KLEINER

Born New York in 1937. She holds a B.F.A. degree from the Empire State College, and an Associate Arts Degree from Rockland Community College. Recently, she was awarded the Best Artists Award by the Art Federation of Orange County. She has had solo exhibitions at the Center for American Art, the Public Image and El Taller Boricua.



"Metamorphose" 1983

JOSE MORALES

Born in New York City in 1947. He studied at the Art Students League in New York after which he pursued art studies in Paris, Spain and Sweden. He has participated in solo and group shows in Sweden, France and Japan as well as throughout the United States.



"Santa Barbara in NY", mixed media on paper, 1984

JESUS (JAY) MUÑIZ

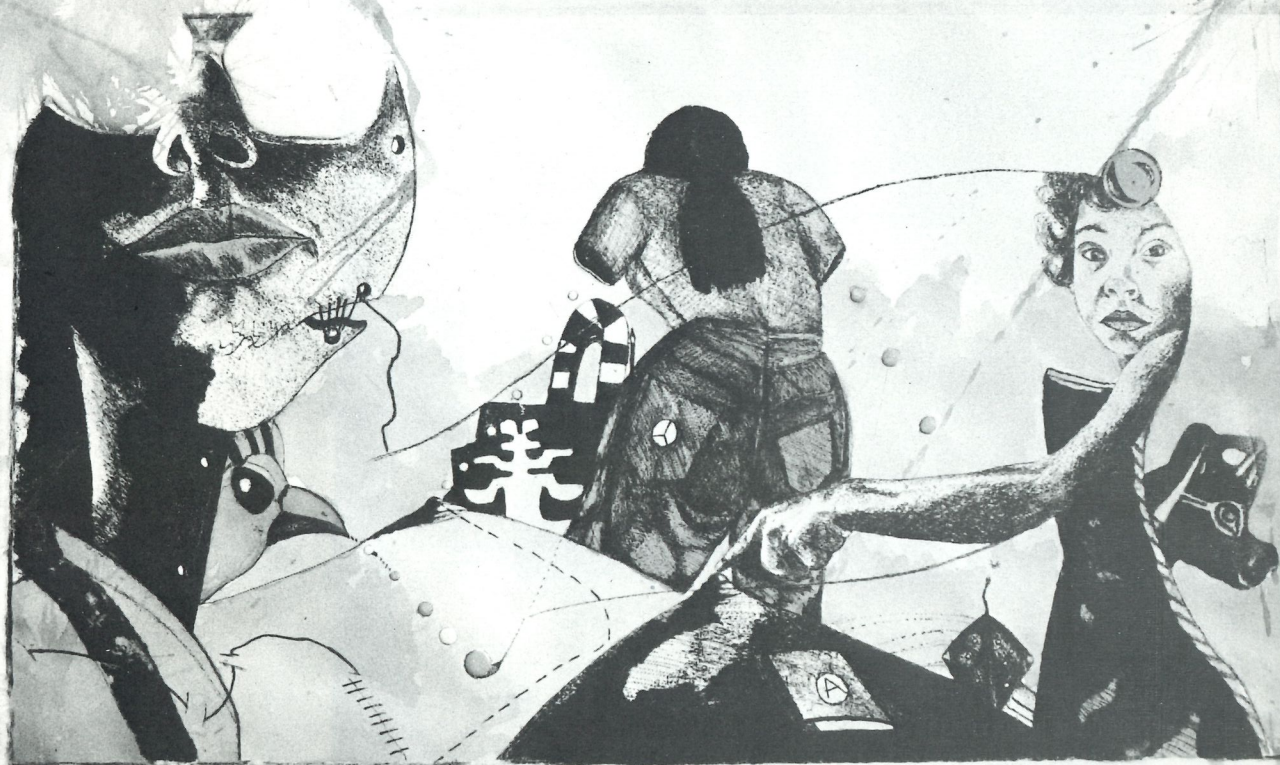
Born in New York in 1956. He attended courses at Lehman College and the Arts Students League. He has participated in travelling group exhibitions at El Taller Boricua where he has been a member since 1979. He is a draftsman who has also worked in framing and painting.



"Naturaleza Muerta Con Guantes, Sombrero y Bufunda" 1981

GERMAN ORTIZ CADENA

Born in Barichara, Colombia in 1959. He received a Masters in Visual Art from the Fine Arts Institute of Santander, Colombia. Later on he pursued studies in advance sculpture at the Educational Alliance in New York. His work has been displayed in solo exhibitions at the New Gallery of the Educational Alliance in New York, as well as in the cities of Medellin, Bucaramanga and Santa Marta. His most recent solo exhibition will be displayed at the Kaleideskop Gallery in West Germany.



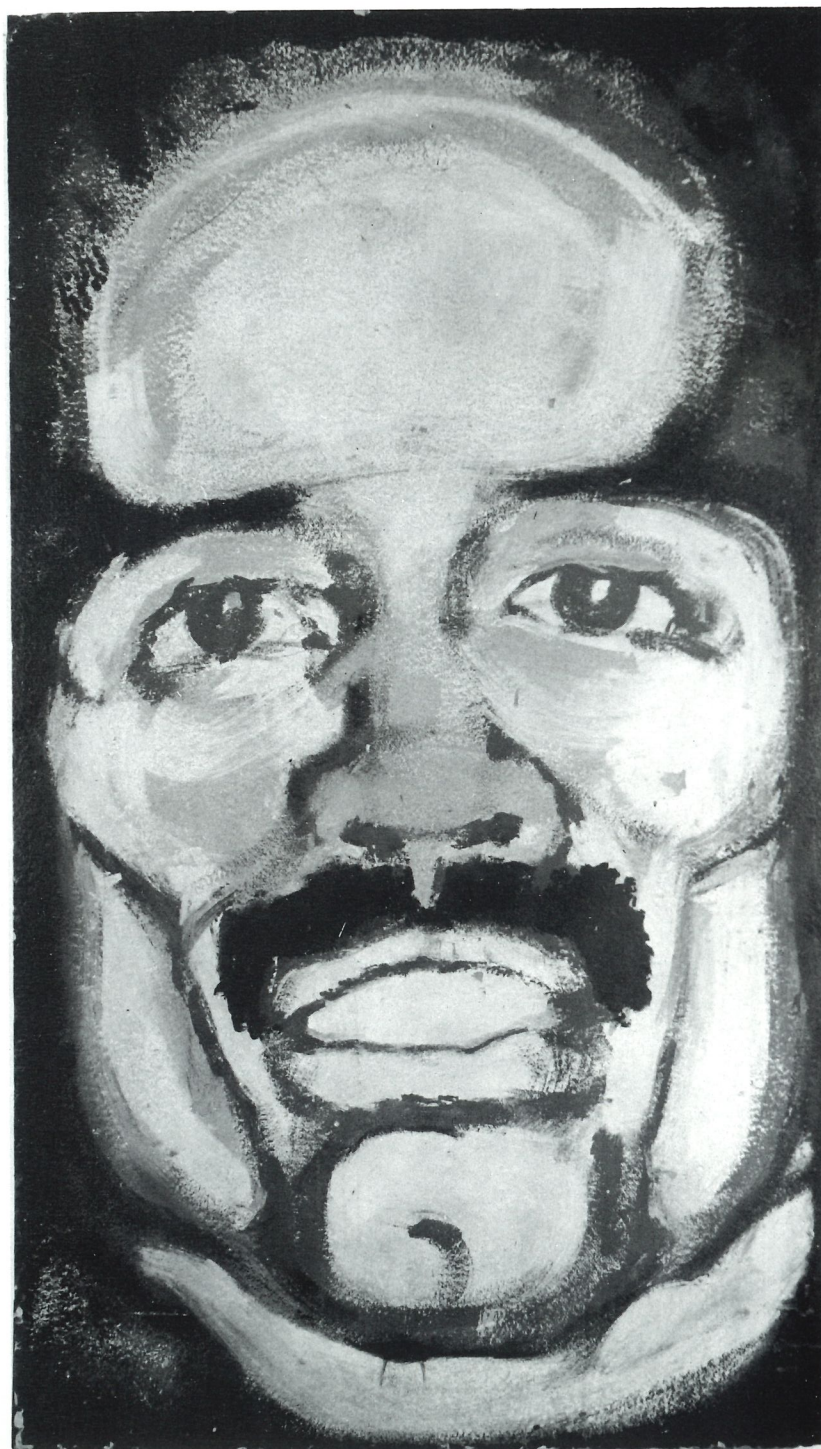
P/O Plexiglass Engraving - "Emergency Button"

GERMAN ORTIZ CADENA
1984

"Boton de Emergencia", 1984

MANUEL OTERO

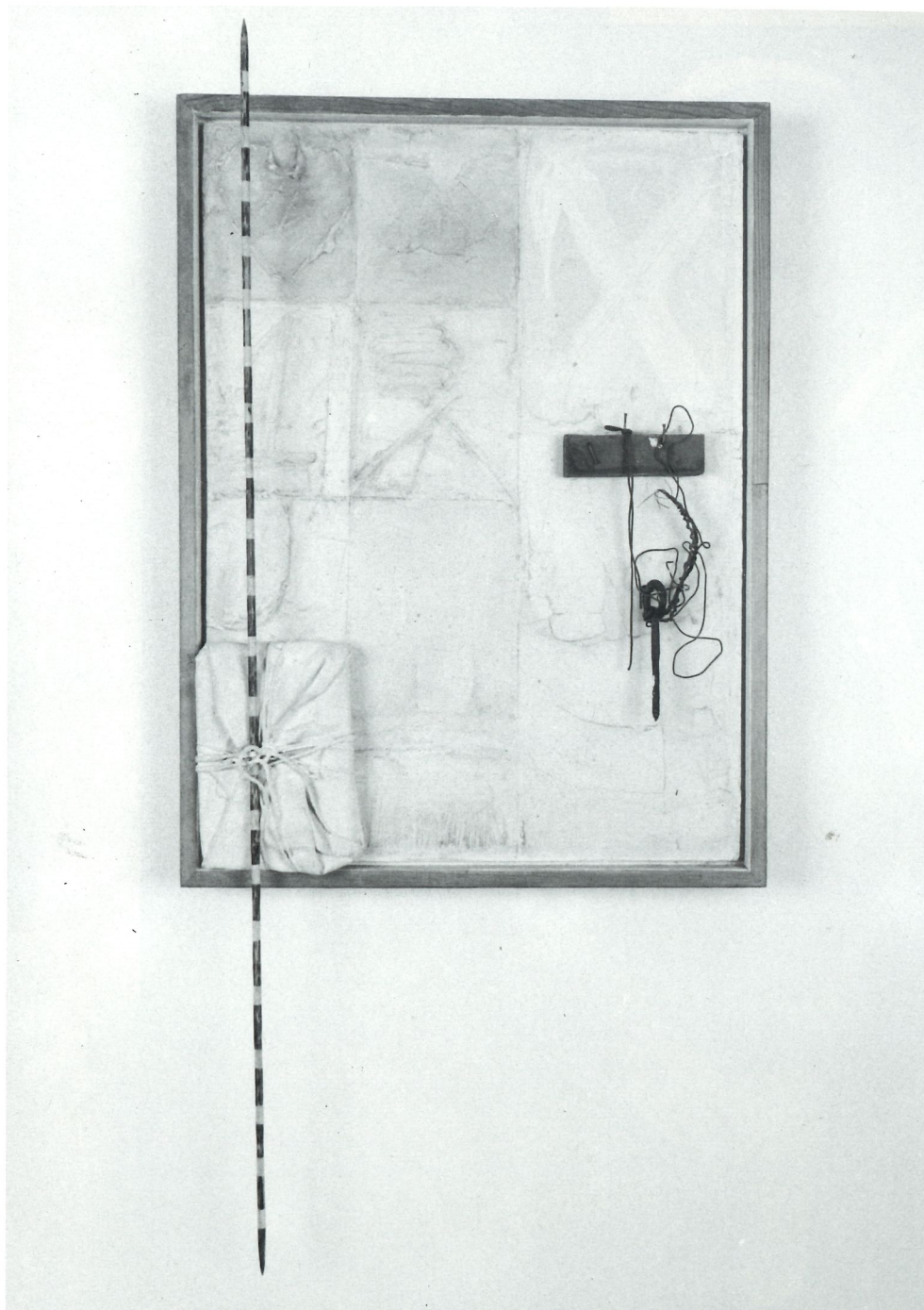
Born in San Juan, Puerto Rico in 1948. He is one of the founding members of El Taller Boricua. He pursued studies in architecture at Columbia University and education at the Bank Street College. In New York, he designed educational material for the Center for Puerto Rican Studies at Hunter College. He is currently operating his own graphic workshop, Graficor, in San Juan, Puerto Rico.



"Retrato de Albizu Campos", 1970

NESTOR OTERO

Born in Caguas, Puerto Rico in 1948. He attended the School of Visual Arts. He was awarded a Gold Medal for Painting by the Museo de Ponce in Puerto Rico and the St. Gaudens Medal for Fine Draftsmanship by the Art Students League in New York. His work has been displayed in solo and group exhibitions at the Museum of Contemporary Hispanic Arts, the Alternative Museum, Exit Art, and at the Institute for Puerto Rican Culture in San Juan.



"Acicate", 1982

CARLOS OSORIO (1927–1984)

Born in Caguas, Puerto Rico. He received art training from the School of Visual Arts. His early graphic works were produced for the Division of Community Education in Puerto Rico, where he created posters and illustrations. He had solo exhibitions at the Museum of the University of Puerto Rico and the Institute of Puerto Rican Culture. In New York, he was a founding member of El Taller Boricua, and a supporter of El Museo del Barrio. He exhibited widely in New York as well as in Mexico, Japan, the Soviet Union, France and Poland.



"Girl Jumping Rope", 1974.

MARTIN (TITO) PEREZ (1943–1974)

Born in New York City. He was a photographer, painter and musician who studied painting and graphic art at the Art Students League and photography in the U.S. Navy. He was also an active contributor to El Taller Boricua during the early seventies.



"Untitled (Body Print)", 1972–74

EDWIN (PITRE) RODRIGUEZ

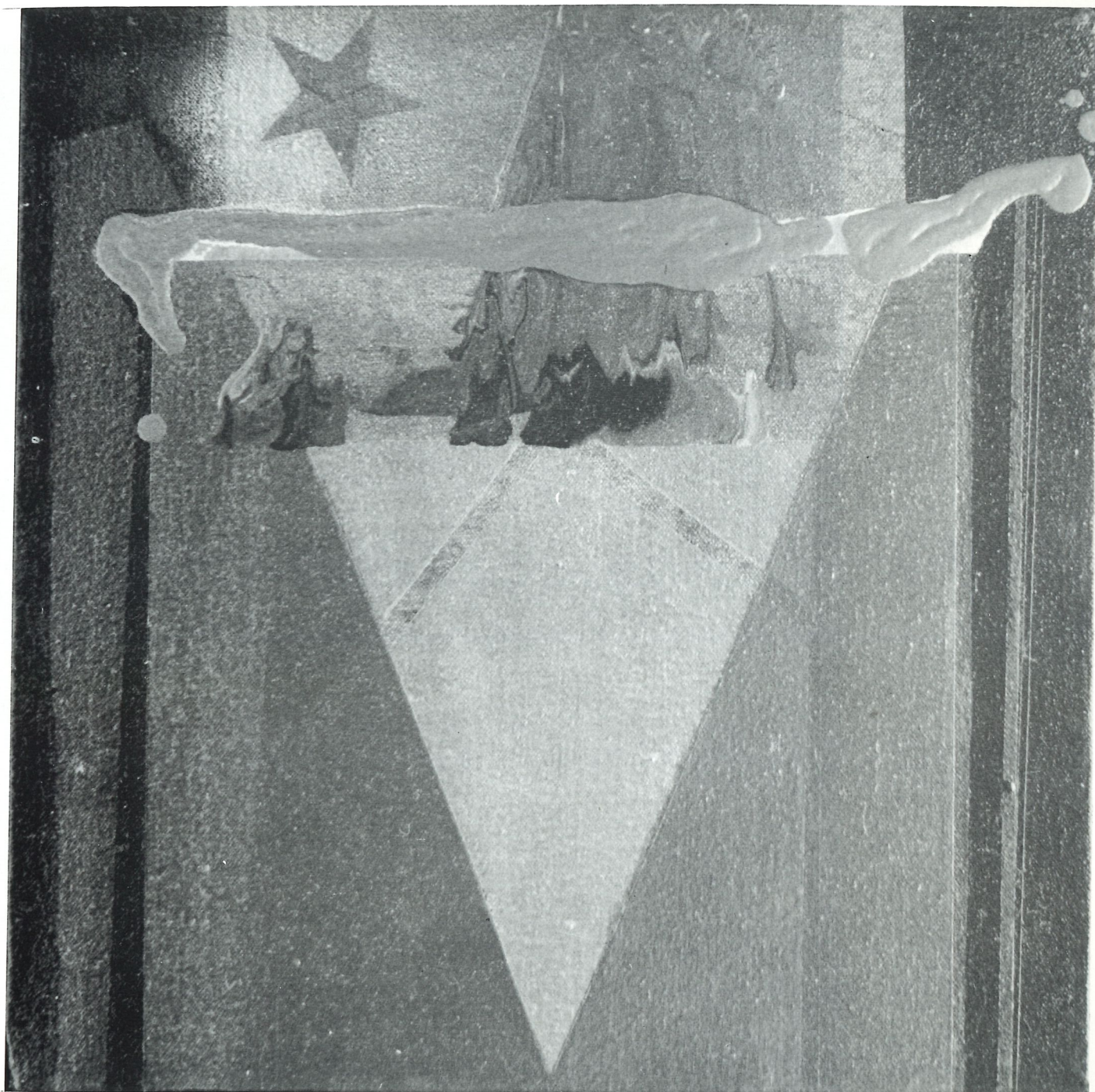
Born in Puerto Rico in 1953. There he pursued studies in art until 1970 when he travelled to New York and joined El Taller Boricua. His work has been exhibited both in Puerto Rico and New York, specifically at the Universidad Interamericana in Puerto Rico, the International Gallery at Hunter College and at Lincoln Center in New York.



"Meylin", 1989

GLORIA RODRIGUEZ

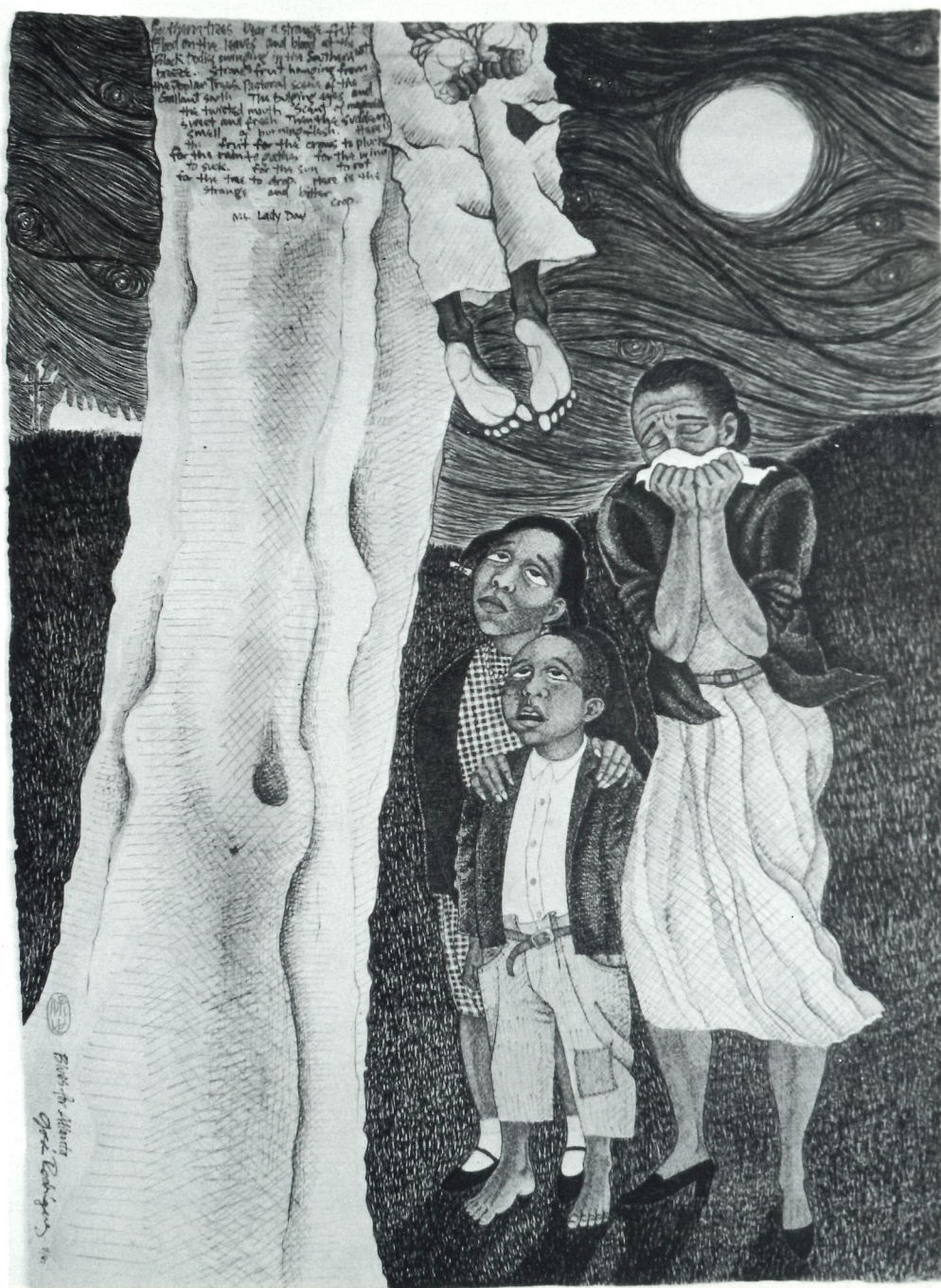
Born in Arecibo, Puerto Rico in 1952. She received a B.F.A. degree from the School of Fine Arts at the Institute of Puerto Rican Culture, and has pursued studies at the Art Students League in New York. Her most recent solo exhibitions were held at Eventos Gallery in New York and at the Hostos Community College Gallery in the Bronx.



"Despues Que el Artista se Muere", 1982

JOSE RODRIGUEZ

Born in New York City in 1956. He received a Professional Certificate of Art from Parsons School of Design and a B.A. with a concentration in Anthropology at Friends World College. He has worked as Artist-in-Residence at the Association of Hispanic Arts, and El Taller Boricua as well as in Japan at the Penthouse Institute of Fine Arts. His work has been displayed in solo exhibitions in Japan at the Bank of the Ryukus, and in New York at El Taller Boricua.



"Blues Para Atlanta", 1981

FERNANDO SALICRUP

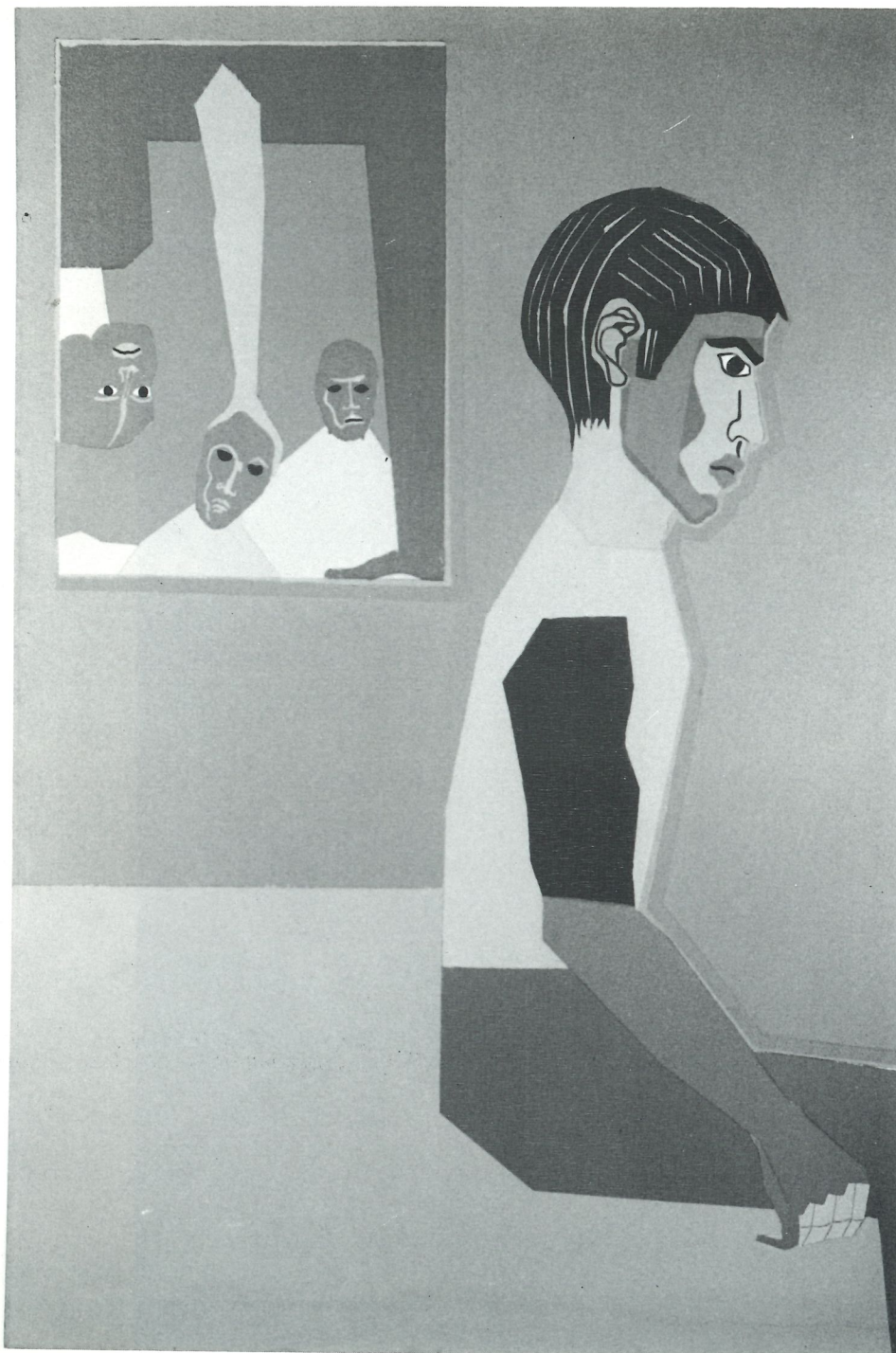
Born in New York in 1946. He received art training at the Philadelphia Academy of Art and the School of Visual Arts in New York. He has taught workshops in printmaking at the United Youth Council, El Taller Boricua and the School Board District in New York. He has had individual exhibitions at El Taller Boricua and various colleges throughout New York City. Among them, La Guardia College, New York College, Brooklyn College, Manhattan Community College, Hunter College and New York University. He is currently co-director of El Taller Boricua.



"Una Vez Mas Columbus", 1976

ARMANDO SOTO

Born in New York in 1945, is one of the founding members of El Taller Boricua. He received a B.F.A. degree from Pratt Institute where he also participated in group shows. He worked at Arts Incorporated, an art consulting group for teachers and students in the Public School System. He painted the murals at University Settlement in the Lower East Side and other schools in the area.



"Untitled", 1970

ELAINE SOTO

Born in New York in 1947. She holds a Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology from New York University and art training from the Art Students League and the School of Visual Arts in New York. Her work has been recently exhibited at the Garrison Art Center in New York. Currently she works on painting and printmaking out of her studio at El Taller Boricua.



"De Leon", 1989

JORGE SOTO (1947–1987)

Born in New York, where he attended Lehman College. He has taught workshops in painting and graphic art and has exhibited extensively in New York and Puerto Rico, in Galeria Tito, Galeria Latinoamericana, Instituto Mexicano Cubano de Relaciones Culturales, Museo de la Universidad de Puerto Rico and the Museo del Grabado Latinoamericano in Puerto Rico.



"Biafra, Studies in Hunger" mixed media on canvas, 1974.

SHOKO TANAKA

Born in Osaka, Japan in 1952. She is a painter and performing artist and holds a B.F.A. degree from the School of Visual Arts. She has exhibited at the Botanical Garden in Brooklyn, and El Taller Boricua. She has also performed at the Theater for the City of New York. She is currently working at Kimono Gallery, an art and fashion gallery in New York.



"Untitled", 1989

NITZA TUFÍÑO

Born in Mexico in 1949. She holds a B.A. degree from the University of Mexico and an M.A. degree in Urban Affairs from Hunter College. She has worked as curator, teacher and consultant of Puerto Rican art. Her current artistic interests lie in the area of public art. Some of her creations are the ceramic murals that decorate the Broadway #1 Line on 86 Street Station and a sculpture piece at the Grosvenor Neighborhood House.



"Pareja Taina", 1972

RAFAEL TUFIÑO

Born in Brooklyn, New York in 1922. In 1936 he moved permanently to Puerto Rico, where he studied under the Spanish painter Alejandro Sánchez Felipe and at Juan Rosado's workshops. Later on he travelled to Mexico to study painting, graphics and mural painting. He contributed to the founding of the Centro de Arte Puertorriqueño in the 1950's. He won a Guggenheim Fellowship in 1956 and has had solo exhibitions in Europe, Latin America and throughout the United States.



"Lavandera", oil on masonite, 48" x 28", 1960. Collection of El Museo del Barrio. Gift of Edward Bejan.

JOSE VAZQUEZ

Has taught photography workshops at El Taller Boricua. He has also worked as curator at En Foco Gallery and has exhibited at The Bronx Museum, Newark Museum, the Association of Hispanic Arts and Galeria Morivivi, among other cultural institutions. He has also completed assignments for commercial and non-commercial entities throughout New York.



"Nandy", black and white photograph

MANUEL VEGA

Born in New York in 1956. He is a draftsman, painter, sculptor, graphic artist, and a graduate of the High School of Art and Design. He has been an Artist-in-Residence at El Taller Boricua, El Museo del Barrio, the Studio Museum in Harlem, as well as at other cultural institutions. He has had individual exhibitions at the Caribbean Cultural Center, the Bronx Council for the Arts and El Taller Boricua.



"Bomba en NY" watercolor on board, 28" x 21", 1983. Proposed study for a mural.



ANNOTATED CHRONOLOGY

INTRODUCTION

Diógenes Ballester

Central to our struggle to maintain and affirm the Puerto Rican culture is the structuring and documenting of our history. The art presented in **Taller Alma Boricua: Reflecting on Twenty Years of the Puerto Rican Workshop, 1969–1989** grew out of a historical context and in turn influenced the development of the Puerto Rican community in “El Barrio” New York City. As such this Annotated Chronology for El Taller Boricua is offered as an initial draft of a history that needs more research and analysis. Information here presented is based on oral accounts by artists and community activists, newspaper articles, brochures, written statements, notes, and official documents. At times information was contradictory and the facts difficult to ascertain. Many artists were not interviewed owing to lack of time and accessibility and their perspectives thus are not represented. It should also be noted that the Chronology does not include the interchange with either artists from Puerto Rico or those belonging to the mainstream of the New York art world. This, too, awaits further research and analysis.

I would like to express my gratitude to El Museo del Barrio and El Taller Boricua for the opportunity to work on this exhibition and thus in my own way participate and contribute to the ongoing history and development of the Puerto Rican Workshop, Inc.

■ **OPPOSITE** Taller co-directors, Irma Ayala, Marcos Dimas, Fernando Salicrup.

Suplemento EL DIARIO LA PRENSA

Galería HOY: Fiesta de Arte Puertorriqueño

Por ANTONIO GIL DE LA MADRID



DISCUTEN OBRA—Mauricio Pireto y Pedro Villalón sorprendidos frente a las obras del segundo. (Foto EL DIARIO—LA PRENSA, por Santini).

"Juegas todos los días con la luz del Universo". El verso meridiano advierte: "como el agua y la luz". al registro mental cuando alcanza la esquina. Calle 30 y el 432 de la Tercera Avenida.

El Sol ensayaba sus pinceles vanales en la policromía de los altos vitrales; hieráticas figuras en embriaguez de luz.

Cuanto plantas levanta la sólida estructura. Antigua iglesia y culto. Leucorio de las almas en comunión con la Divinidad. Ahora, culto de la belleza y templo del Espiritu.

Centro Puertorriqueño de Relaciones Culturales de la Sociedad de Amigos de Puerto Rico, Inc. Entramos y quedamos inmersos en la fiesta. Fiesta de color. Fiesta de forma. Por que allí está de fiesta la cultura puertorriqueña.

Se abrió la Galería HOY! Visitas artistas puertorriqueños —Héctor Álvarez, Antonio Bechara, Héctor Cabán, David Cortés, Adrián García, Domínguez García, James Gross, Miguel Guzmán, Víctor Mula, Eduardo Ortiz, Carlos Osorio, José A. Pizarro, Mauricio Pireto, Marcos Ramírez, Nyrca Rodríguez, Martín Rubio, Ar-

mundo Solo, Radamé Santos, María Soler y Pedro Villalón— aseguran el recinto en múltiples manifestaciones de belleza y arte!

Brillantes de colores. Brillante combinación de matices. Tremenda fuerza sugestiva. Asombrosa poder de expresión. Mística. Impresionantes efectos de luz.

Allá, al fondo, la plástica comprende la estatua de Eduardo Ortiz. Su "Borinquen"—entre el relieve y la estatua— cobra vida y emerge de un trasfondo que le da proyección y sentido.

Primitivismo, surrealismo contemporáneo, cubismo, efemismo, constructivismo, impresionismo, realismo... Protesta allí, contra la deshumanización del hombre. Ach, carnaval de colores contenido en trazos que perfilan la abstracción en dimensión y forma. Más allá, supervivencia del más fuerte: furo telórico; lucha entre bestias. Cavidades que escapan casi del lleno marino, anula.

Más de 500 personas han visitado ya la exhibición. Testimonio irrefutable de que está despierta la inquietud artística de la comunidad. Palmaria prueba de que hay público suficiente para montar un permanente en una galería donde nuestros pintores

Galería HOY representa un esfuerzo de potenciar la obra de los artistas puertorriqueños residentes en Nueva York. Constituye un esfuerzo de proveerles de un lugar permanente para exhibir sus obras y donde los puertorriqueños y otros puedan acudir a disfrutar de una significativa experiencia.

Señalan los organizadores de la Galería que los artistas puertorriqueños, en su mayor parte, han permanecido apartados del escenario artístico de la ciudad. Esta galería se propone cambiar esto porque —agregan— sabemos que hay

magíficos artistas entre los puertorriqueños que tienen muchísimo que ofrecer y quienes deben ocupar el lugar que les corresponde en el panorama artístico de la ciudad.

La Galería HOY abre sus puertas a artistas y a espectadores, invitándolos a reunirse regularmente en su recinto para cultivar el intercambio de ideas y establecer el diálogo

de la Sociedad de Amigos de Puerto Rico que, bajo la dirección de la Ilustre dama Ana María Guerrero y con la colaboración de nuestros mejores exponentes en las artes, avanza a la vanguardia de las fuerzas positivas que se empeñan en revitalizar en estos predios la tradición cultural puertorriqueña.

Ya nuevamente en el aje



RADAMES y Angella Santos frente a la obra del primero. (Foto EL DIARIO—LA PRENSA, por Santini).

lago que enlaza su creación artística.

En el futuro la Galería HOY se integrará —cuando el Centro Puertorriqueño de Relaciones Culturales quede abierto al público en el mismo edificio— a la Galería Francisco Oller, que será la galería permanente del Centro.

La exhibición, que abre sus puertas de tres de la tarde a ocho de la noche, durará hasta el sábado 31 de los corrientes. La entrada es gratis y toda la comunidad está cordialmente invitada a asistir a esta fiesta de buen arte puertorriqueño.

Se abra la Galería HOY en la primera planta de la sede

tro y el caso callejero —dejado atrás el umbral— fue casi doloroso el ardor esfuerzo que impuso la readaptación al medio. Escapaba la inevitable sensación de pos y de armonía. Dejábamos atrás el Reino de la Belleza, surgiendo en el páramo de lo prosaico y lo brutal de la calle neoyorquina.

Al irse, las luces del incipiente crepusculo camuflaban su oro en los altos vitrales. Al regresar la esquina se retorcía leve —temor a la palabra apenas comenzada en labios— en el registro mental el verso meridiano: "Juegas todos los días con la luz del Universo".



AUTOS Y OBRA—Héctor Álvarez junto a una de sus obras. (Foto EL DIARIO—LA PRENSA, por Santini).

TALENTO PUERTORRIQUEÑO.—Artistas cuyas obras están expuestas en la Galería HOY: De izquierda a derecha, primer plano: Mauricio Pireto, Manuel García Ríos, Eduardo Ortiz, Martín Rubio, Carlos Osorio, la poeta Ana Angella Abramowitz, Ana María Guerrero, Presidente

de la Sociedad Amigos de Puerto Rico; Jaime Zimán, James Gross. Segundo plano: Antonio Bechara, David Cortés, Héctor Cabán, Miguel A. Guzmán, Armando Soler y Adrián García. (Foto EL DIARIO—LA PRENSA, por Santini).

1969-70

Formative meetings of what was later to evolve into Taller Boricua were held at the Centro Puertorriqueño de Relaciones Culturales de la Sociedad de Amigos de Puerto Rico, Inc. (Puerto Rican Center for Cultural Relations of the Society of Friends of Puerto Rico) located at the old church at 432 Third Avenue, New York City where artists maintained studios and workshops and had created Galeria Hoy.

ABOVE Article review of Galeria Hoy, forerunner of Taller Boricua.

OPPOSITE Arts Coalition demonstrates at the Museum of Modern Art, 1970.

MEMBERSHIP

Marcos Dimas Ramírez, Adrián García, and Armando Soto. Founding members were formerly associated with the School of Visual Arts and Murlot Workshop. Carlos Osorio was associated with the Society of Friends of Puerto Rico.

PHILOSOPHY AND GOALS

The founding members of the Taller Boricua were young Puerto Rican artists from both Puerto Rico and the United States. As an advocacy group, they were dissatisfied with problems facing the community, in the areas of housing, health, education, genocide and culture. Cultural issues of concern were the exclusion and failure to acknowledge minority artists and the lack of community cultural and educational services.

The goal of the founding members was to establish a cultural and educational center for the Puerto Rican community in New York City which aimed to the aesthetic, cultural, historical, political, and economic experience of Puerto Ricans in New York. They looked to establish this center in either the Barrio or the Lower East Side because both communities had large Puerto Rican populations.

ESTHETIC DEVELOPMENT

The founding members of El Taller Boricua were part of a larger aesthetic and cultural movement that arose during the late 1960's in New York City. Its artists and cultural organizations were in the process of redefining the "New York Puerto Rican aesthetic. This self-awareness manifested itself in a number of exhibitions and activities including a painting and sculpture exhibition, The Contemporary Puerto Rican Artists, at the Brooklyn Museum; a painting exhibition at the LOEB Student Center at New York University; the opening of Galeria Hoy with the Fiesta de Arte Puertorriqueño; the establishment of El Museo del Barrio; and the participation of Puerto Rican artists in the Art Worker's Coalition demonstrations. The paintings and sculpture expressions generally considered part of the "New York Puerto Rican aesthetic included abstract expressionism, geometric abstraction, social realism, surrealism, and assemblage with cultural and ethnic icons.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Founding members of El Taller Boricua participated in the Puerto Rican Artist Coalition Exhibit held at the James Weldon Johnson Theater at 110th Street and Lexington Avenue.

Through this exhibition, they established direct links with the Puerto Rican community in El Barrio and were able to develop relations with Manuel "Neco" Otero, member of the Real Great Society, an urban-planning and architectural association.



TALLER • GALERIA **BORICUA**



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AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF A NUYORICAN

Half blue, feet first
she battled into the world.
Hardly surviving the blood cord twice wrapped,
tense around her neck. Hanging.
Womb pressing, pushing,
oulling life from mother's child.
Fragil flesh emerging perfect in blueness,
like the lifeline that sustained her,
yet limp, almost a corpse.

Her mother claims the virgin interceded.
Invoked through divine promise, in prayer,
that caused her dark eyes to open,
her tongue to taste air like fire,
as the blueness faded.
tracing death on the tail of an eclipse.

And as in birth from her darkness,
the free-giving sun inched slow to visibility,
revealing all color and form,
a great teacher, generous and awesome.
silent and reverent, loud and blasphemous,
constant,
sculpting edges of definition
in the shadow and light of multiple universes.



Sandy with daughter Christina, Galería Morivi, 1977.

Half-blue, feet first
she battled her way.
The world did not want another brown,
another slant-eyed-olive-indian-black-child.
Did not want another rainbow empowered song
added to repertoire in blue,
or azure, or indigo,
or caribbean crystal.
Did not want another mouth to feed,
especially another rock-the-boat poet,
another voice opened wide,
fixed on global spectrum of defiance.

The meaning of war defined her. Gasping and
innocent,
before she knew her mother,
before she discovered herself, barely alive,
gathering weapons into her being with each breath
that filled her,
growing stronger,
determined
to beat all the odds.

SANDRA MARIA ESTEVES

Selected from "Bluestown Mockingbird Mambo",
Arte Publico Press, 1990.



■ 1970-71

El Taller Boricua's first location was the building occupied by the Real Great Society, 1673 Madison Avenue, at the corner of 111th Street. The space consisted of three floors, comprising six rooms used for painting and graphics. The organization was first called Taller de la 111 (111th Street Workshop) and later, Taller Alma Boricua.

■ **ABOVE** Classical guitarist Léo Rivera

MEMBERSHIP

Co-founders: Marcos Dimas Ramírez, Adrián García, Carlos Osorio, Armando Soto, Rafael Tufiño, and Manuel "Neco" Otero.

PHILOSOPHY AND GOALS

El Taller Boricua was incorporated on September 17, 1970, as The Puerto Rican Workshop, Inc., as a nonprofit organization. The goal was to establish a workshop that would provide space for the production of art, the teaching of art classes, and the interchange of ideas with cultural and political workers in the community. Outdoor exhibits were to be developed as a method of community outreach education, as well as a vehicle for financial support. Organizationally, the group established itself as a collective based on consensus decision making.

ÆSTHETIC DEVELOPMENT

During this period the aesthetic principle was "back to the roots." Members looked to the Taino, African, and Spanish cultural traditions of their ancestors for symbols, imagery, and rituals, which they then used in their art. For subject matter they utilized the political, social, and economic realities of their lives as sons and daughters of the Puerto Rican migration and the struggle for the independence of Puerto Rico. They painted portraits of nationalistic leaders such as Pedro Albizu Campos and Ramón Emeterio Betances. They continued to use abstract expressionism, geometric abstraction, and social realism but now incorporated Taino petroglyphs and African symbols and masks. In their silk screens and other graphics and their photography, they integrated images and words to represent political and artistic organizations such as the Young Lords, Movimiento Pro-Independencia, and El Museo del Barrio. Members develop individual monograms based on Taino symbols, which they used to sign their graphics and from which the Taller Boricua logo was later developed.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

During this period, El Taller became not only a place where people from the Barrio, artists, community organizers, and intellectuals interacted, but also a shelter amid the reality of North American racism. El Taller was a place of involvement, lending support to related causes.

El Taller worked with Park East High School to provide art classes to Puerto Rican students. It continued to offer other classes at the workshop and to provide outdoor exhibitions in the community.

Collaborators were Joe Falcón, Gil De La Madrid, Hiram Maristany, Roberto Ortiz Meléndez, Dylcia Pagán, Harry Quintana, Leo Rivera, Julio Rodríguez, Martín Rubio, Movimiento Pro-Independencia, and the Young Lords.

■ 1971-72

El Taller Boricua moved to 1256 Second Avenue, between 110th and 111th streets, when the Real Great Society building was designated to be demolished by the City of New York. The new location consisted of a street-level storefront, which was divided into two spaces: a gallery and work area. Limited work space was provided for the production of silk-screen graphics and paintings. It appears that only Carlos Osorio, who lived at El Taller, painted there during this period. The backyard provided an area that was used to create assemblages of found objects and as the location for the beginning of El Taller's first film, a collaboration between Marcos Dimas and Héctor Nieves that showed the production of silk-screen printing and a travelling exhibition to Plaza Betances in the South Bronx.

MEMBERSHIP

Olga Alemán, Marcos Dimas, Adrián García, Jimmy Jiménez, Carlos Osorio, Manuel "Neco" Otero, Edwin (Pitre) Rodríguez, José "Yoyo" Rodríguez, Armando Soto, Samuel Tanko, Nitza Tufiño, Rafael Tufiño, Jorge Soto, Vitín Linares and Neca.

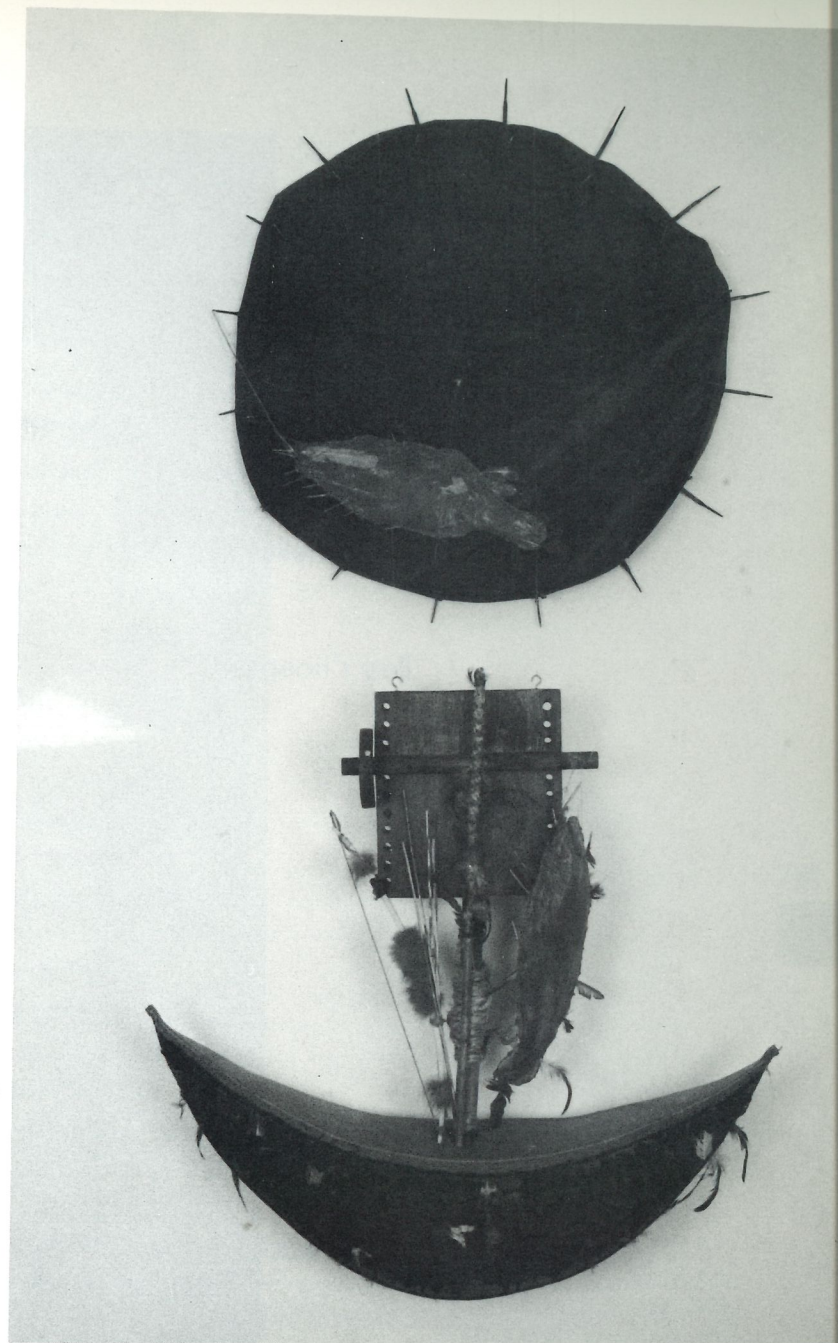
PHILOSOPHY AND GOALS

Members of El Taller Boricua saw themselves as artists and cultural workers. General goals and organizational structure remained the same as in previous years. The specific goal of this period was to reach the larger Puerto Rican community in New York City, planting seeds of knowledge, raising consciousness, spreading revolutionary ideas. The vehicle for the extended outreach was outdoor exhibits, which were provided in every borough, at schools, festivals, community centers, and on the street. Members Manuel Otero, Nitza Tufiño, Adrián García, and Samuel Tanko left to build and establish workshops for El Museo del Barrio.

ÆSTHETIC DEVELOPMENT

By this time the "New York Puerto Rican aesthetic" was more developed and distinct in its use of abstract and representational symbols taken from Taino and African culture and from the social, political, and economic experiences of the Puerto Rican immigrant.

The production of graphics and the development and use of individual monograms intensified. For the first time, assemblages were created from El Barrio found objects to depict the struggle of life in the community. Film as an artistic medium was also explored at this time.

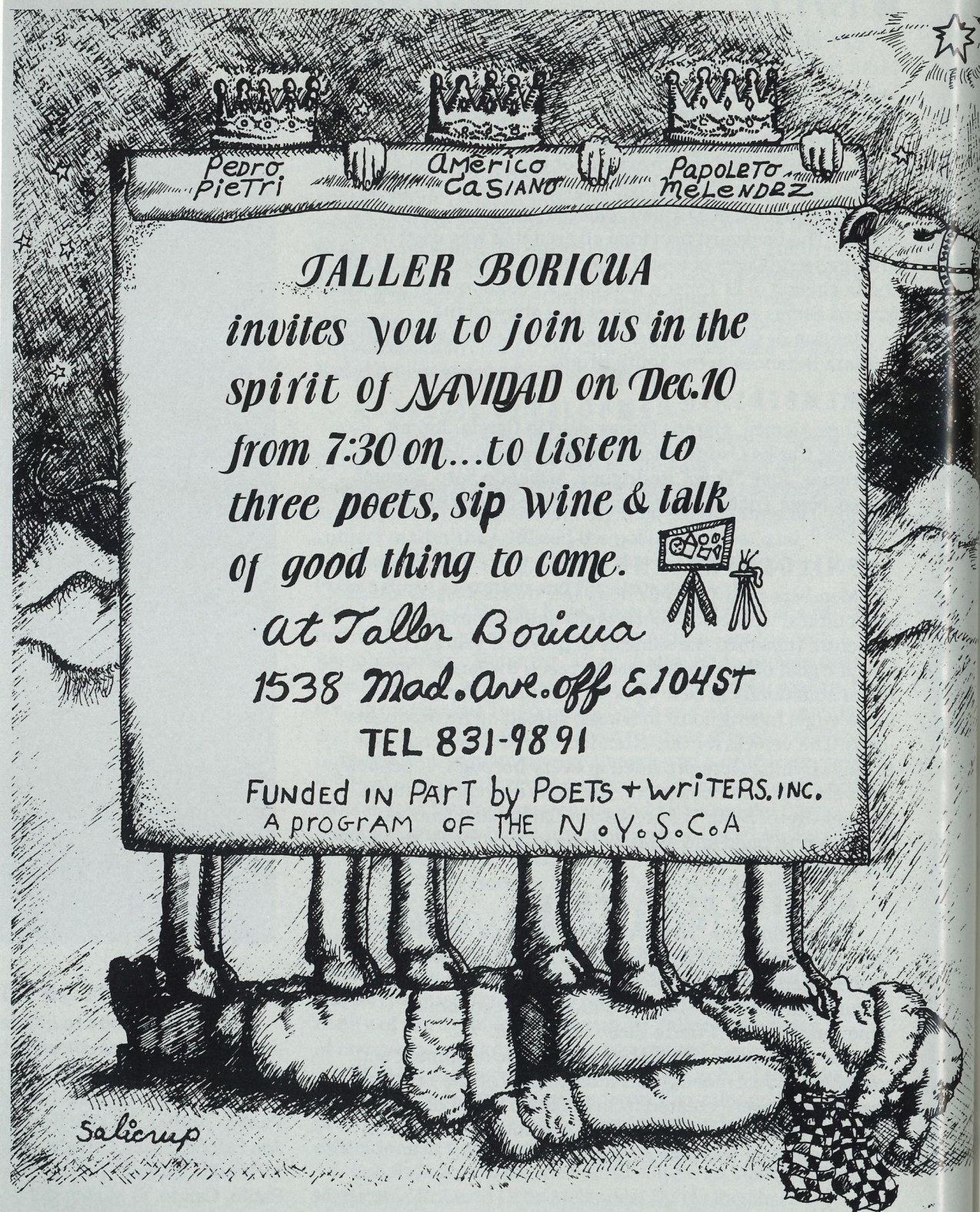


COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Outdoor exhibits to communities beyond El Barrio were major endeavors of community work. Poets and musicians from El Barrio performed at the gallery space of El Taller.

Collaborators were Julio Rodríguez, Héctor Nieves, Ramón Abdías, Muskie Borrero, Ismael Carlo, David Cottes, Joe Falcón, Frank Espada, Juan Maldonado, Roberto Ortiz Meléndez, Samuel Tanko, Ana Marta Morales, Leo Rivera, Palilo, Cando, El Museo del Barrio and others.

■ ABOVE Marcos Dimas "The Voyager", mixed media, 36" x 38" x 96", 1981.



CAR SIX
AMERICO CASIANO

like chipped pearl
fallen fish scale clung frozen
like the jagged Hudson running
as if it were blood from a bullet hole
snow falls

you wake up feeling the surgeon's pull
fear lingering in your face

nightmare: tarry shadows
that old Columbian coronel
the three wives of Leo
surrounding you

like the plastic bag
put around your bullet hole
they cling to your intestine
and suck out all that's left

Peruvian Eva dancing disco
giving you lustful stare
morpheme: an occasional nibble
everything comes to head
Joe Fish is caught in your net
alligator tears
your sharp teeth biting tight
telephone blinking like a christmas tree

drone continuing along dark Neried
dispatcher blurting into night
car six willie car six

O THE RIVER THAT GROWS
La Memoria, for Tito Perez

Tuesday morning
Through the curtained windows
the sun made its way
to touch the floors
&the walls
&the paintings
&the lonely desk
that make Taller Boricua
quiet now
The tequila bottle is empty
The glass has wanted touch
Tuesday morning
Tito is dead

I have stayed here alone
in this silent sob that hangs heavy now
to make the calls
that would bring help &shoulders
on which to cry
the others tired
from these nights of memories
that come &go The others
they have have gone
to tell the story of this new pain
that is ours(
the tears
the river that grows)

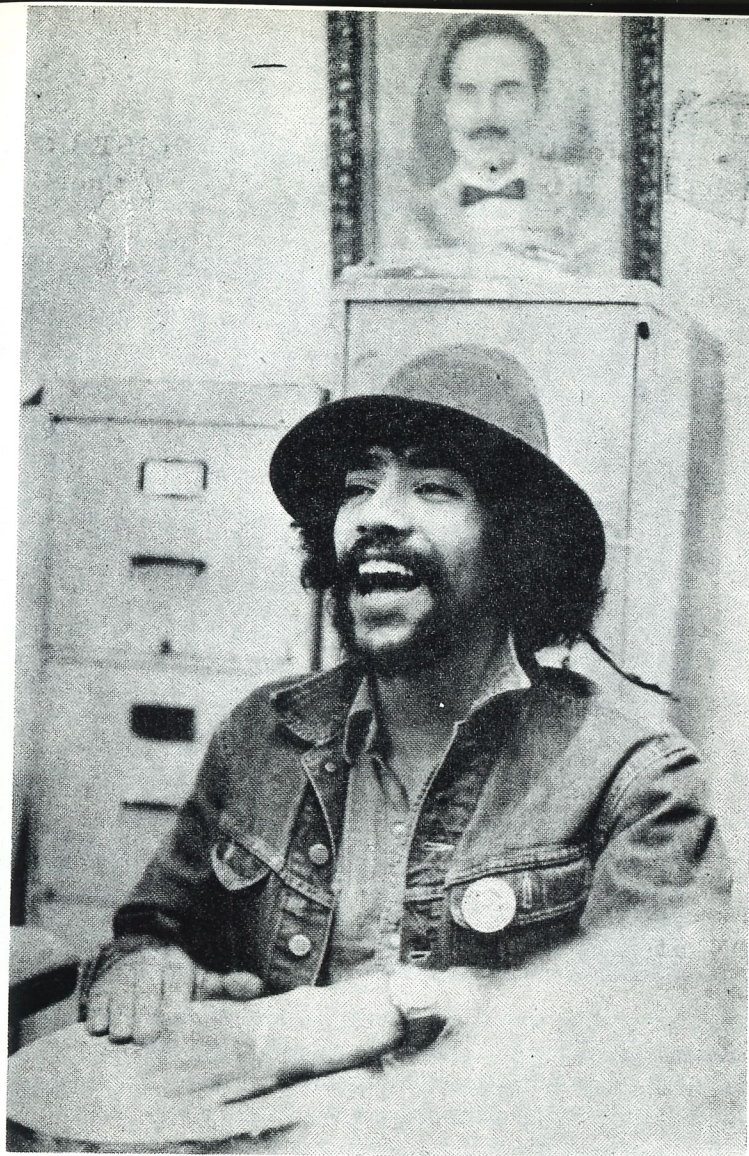
I stayed home
on the other side
of the river that divides

that Sunday night of winter's frost
on which he dared
to smile out loud
&laugh against the faces
of the proud
Tito (a poet
of a mechanical eye
with a paintbrush &rhythm
of a tropical wind)
Tito (a father
of a child that loves)
Tito swung a slow sway
of death within the cold
of prisonwalls
What smiles
came to fill the faces
of those that beat you
into a final sleep
In what latrine
did your wild pigs murder you

Tuesday morning
It is while i dial
another set of seven numbers
that would bring help &shoulders
on which to dry It is then
I remember
the story of this new pain
that is ours(
Man,
Tito is dead

the tears
the river that grows

JESUS PAPOLETO MELENDEZ



■ 1972-78

In 1972 Taller Boricua moved to a loft space at 1536 Madison Avenue, at 104th Street. The acquisition of larger space afforded better classroom facilities and gave artist members special areas in which to work.

MEMBERSHIP

Luis Cancel, Máximo Colón, Rafael Colón-Morales, Davo Cruz, Marcos Dimas, Sandra Esteves, Carlos Osorio, Martín (Tito) Pérez, Wanda Quiñones, Fernando Salicrup, Jorge Soto, and Antonio (Tony) Vásquez, and Jimmy Jiménez.

PHILOSOPHY AND GOALS

Continuing goals were to provide space for the production of art, to teach art classes to the community, and to exchange with cultural and political workers in the commu-

nity. Jorge Soto initiated a series of printing workshops and outdoor demonstrations for young adults and children. Martín (Tito) Pérez initiates a photo lab class.

ÆSTHETIC DEVELOPMENT

The "New York Puerto Rican aesthetic" had now matured. Individual artists had developed a particular language of expression in paintings, graphics, and assemblage works. Articles were written on the subject, and artists referred to themselves as using Pre-Columbian as well as African and Third World aesthetics within the roster of inspirations.

Produced by Marcos Dimas, the film "Towards a Collective Expression" documented the works and ideas of Puerto Rican artists from El Taller and was aired on the program "Realidades" on WNET Channel 13.

Photography became an artistic medium of expression at El Taller. The black and white photo lab was redesigned and installed by Máximo Colón for the use of classes and individual artists. The photography tended to be documentary accounts of life in the Barrio.

Poetry and music were integrated with the visual arts in performance art pieces, with contributions by Joe Falcón, Sandra Esteves, René Ojeda and Conjunto Unión, among others.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Several members of El Taller sat on the Board of Directors of El Museo del Barrio.

Jewelry making and arts and crafts were taught by Sandra Esteves and Esperanza Martel to women and young adults in the community as part of the roster of outreach programs.

Taller worked closely with "Realidades," advocating Latino programming on public television.

Taller collaborated with the Centro de Estudios Puertorriqueños (Portfolio Proletario) on the production of educational prints. This venture intensified the exchange between the artists and the academic community.

Wanda Quiñones joined El Taller and did batik printing.

Taller demonstrated for human rights following the death of Tito Pérez.

Collaborators were Ricardo Campos, Américo Casiano, Doris Collazo, Joe Falcón, Betty Garcia, Tato Laviera, Angel Luis Méndez, José Morales, Miriam Hernández, Rene Ojeda, Roberto Ortiz Meléndez, Carlos Ortiz, Pedro Pedraza, Pedro Pietri, Tony Rivera, Papoleto Meléndez, Miguel Algarín, Association of Hispanic Arts, Saint Ann's Church, La Colectiva de Artistas Puertorriqueños, East Harlem Jay Ceas, Centro de Estudios Puertorriqueños, Galeria Tito, NuyoRican Poets Cafe, Taller Loiza and Conjunto Union.

■ ABOVE Artist and Taller member Martín "Tito" Pérez.

■ 1978-88

El Taller moved to the Heckscher Building to form in conjunction with several other cultural and educational organizations, the East Harlem Arts and Education Complex Consortium, located at 1 East 104th Street. El Taller occupied a wing of the second floor. The new quarters included individual and collective studio space, permanent graphic room, two rooms for artists-in-residence, a lobby gallery, and an office.

Gilberto Hernández now was master silkscreen artist-in-charge.

MEMBERSHIP

Membership was open to national and international artists. Members include: Zana Adelman, Daisy Almeda, Sigfrido Benítez, Aleta Bass, Carlos Blacker, José Carrero, Vidal Centeno, Félix Cordero, Marcos Dimas, Sharon Fraizer, Josie González, Jimmy Gross Alvarez, Gilberto Hernández, Miriam Hernández, Lee Kleiner, Susan Longley, Jesús (Jay) Muñiz, José Morales, German Ortiz-Cadena, Néstor Otero, Freddy Pérez, Julio Quiñones, Wanda Quiñones, Gloria Rodríguez, José Rodríguez, Edwin (Pitre) Rodríguez, Antonio Rivera, Astra Rivera, Eugenia Rojas, Federico Ruiz, Fernando Salicrup, Jorge Soto, Angel Sepúlveda, Elaine Soto, Nancy Sotomayor, Shoko Tanaka, Manuel Vega, and Eldad Ziv.

PHILOSOPHY AND GOALS

Artistic and educational goals remained the same.

A formal and organizational structure was implemented and then revised to meet administrative demands.

A new goal of procuring permanent space was undertaken.

ÆSTHETIC DEVELOPMENT

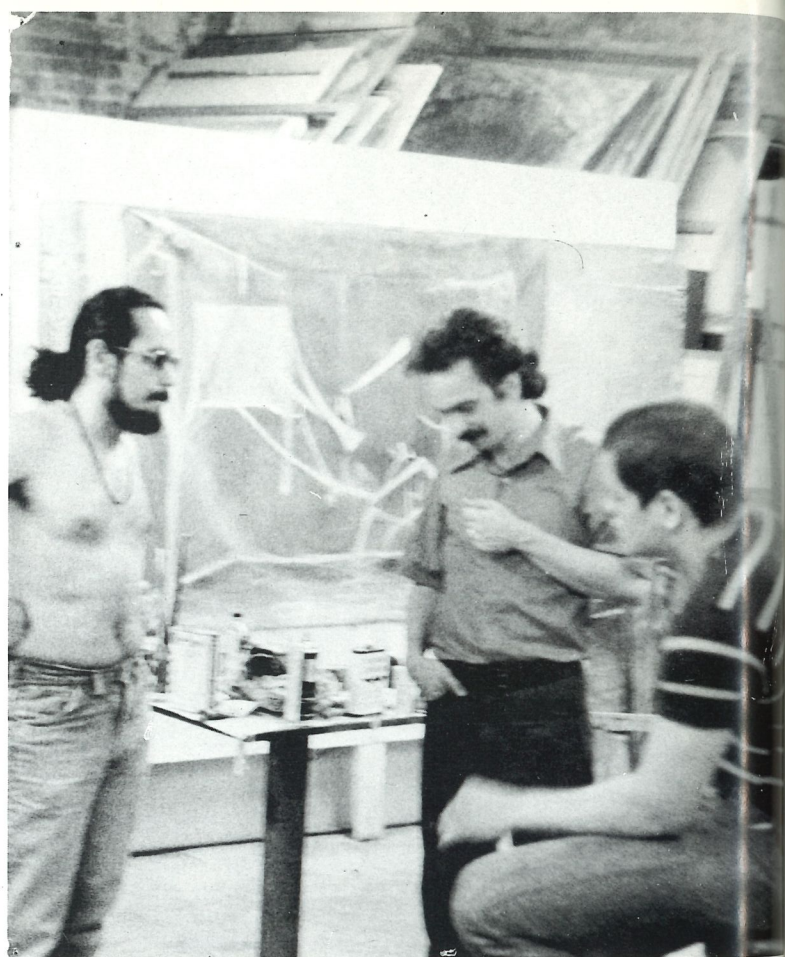
The artist-in-residence program always a source of variety and nuance, brought to El Taller new artists with different modes of expression, including murals, painting, collage, installations, constructions, multimedia work, video, and photography.

The Puerto Rican aesthetic in New York associated and incorporated the influences of expressionism, neoexpressionism, conceptual and technology art.

At El Taller the assemblage of found objects matured into a strong art form and evolved into installation works.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

El Taller participated in numerous art exhibitions locally, nationally, and internationally. "Events," an exhibition of Taller artists at the New Museum of Contemporary Art in New York City in 1981, served as a showcase to mainstream art of contemporaneous parallel art movements. The con-



cept of art groups was shared with Fashion Moda and CoLab. El Taller was invited to "The Other America," an art show in West Berlin that subsequently travelled throughout Europe. The exhibition centered on the art of advocacy in America.

Performance art, both spontaneous and more structured, continued to be created by poets, musicians, and the visual artists.

Community involvement expanded to include interaction with government agencies. Spearheaded by Fernando Salicrup, the Taller became involved in housing and community development in East Harlem.

Collaborators were Irma Ayala, Américo Casiano, Carmen Cruz, Sandra Esteves, Franklyn Flores, Elsie Aquino, Sandra Estevas, Larry Varas, Susana, René Molinar, José Morales, Carlos Ortiz, Juan Shamsul Alam, Pedro Pietri, Noel Rico, Bimbo Rivas, Aguilar Senior Citizens, El Museo del Barrio, Boricua College, Conjunto Libre, Centro de Estudios Puertorriqueños, Association of Hispanic Arts, Afro-Caribbean Poetry Theater, Caribbean Cultural Center, School District No.4, El Taller Puertorriqueño de Philadelphia, David Valentin, Suni Paz, The Puerto Rican Traveling Theater, Morivivi Gallery, Teatro Cuatro, New Rican Village, New Yorrican Poets Cafe, and the Public Libraries of New York City.

■ ABOVE Marcos Dimas, Rafael Colón Morales, Jorge Soto, El Taller, Madison Avenue.

Bow legged and always broke
he was more of paradise than paradise itself
el sapo verde
brinca from here to there
bow legs' and in paradise
his eyes eran el color of the sun
bow legs' paradise
was a purple pond
the size
de una bola de carne
metida en el biente of the eternal universe
he spoke no english
only spanish when talked to
by others
bow legs paradise was the colors of emeralds
with smells of rice and beans in its stomach
y cuando se reía sus dientes eran blancos-white
water pearl dressed in bermuda shorts
stretching from here to Habana
to Haiti
for this sapo verde
could swim el mundo entero
and not drown in his sleep
only when he was forced
to flee
to be
man
in someone else's country
that he knew

that he was not mortal
that he could die from hunger
from not smelling the flowers that encircle his pond
from not touching el fango rojo beneath his soul
from not drinking in the sounds
de sus mañanitas
y los coquíes playing trombone
that made him who he was without his island pond
to bathe in
este sapo verde
in paradise
became a beautiful butterfly
un sapo volador
una berruga en el espacio con alas arcoiris
on the day god beckoned to him to visit
he flew
oh how lovely he flew
rainbow pasted against horizon
towards heaven
heavy with stars
luna de queso
when he died he was no longer a tadpole
on the day it rained on his blue pond
rimming with life
el era un jíbaro.....

ROBERTORTIZMELENDEZ* 89



■ 1978 TO THE PRESENT

In 1988 El Taller Boricua moved to its present location at 121 East 106th Street, a renovated four story brownstone. There is a gallery, individual and collective studio space, and an office.

During the dislocation caused by the move, a number of Taller members moved to 125th Street to a spaced provided by Eventos.

MEMBERSHIP

Irma Ayala, Marcos Dimas, Sharon Fraizer, Miriam Hernández, Lee Kliener, Jesús (Jay) Muniz, Fernando Salicrup, Elaine Soto, and Shoko Tanaka.

PHILOSOPHY AND GOALS

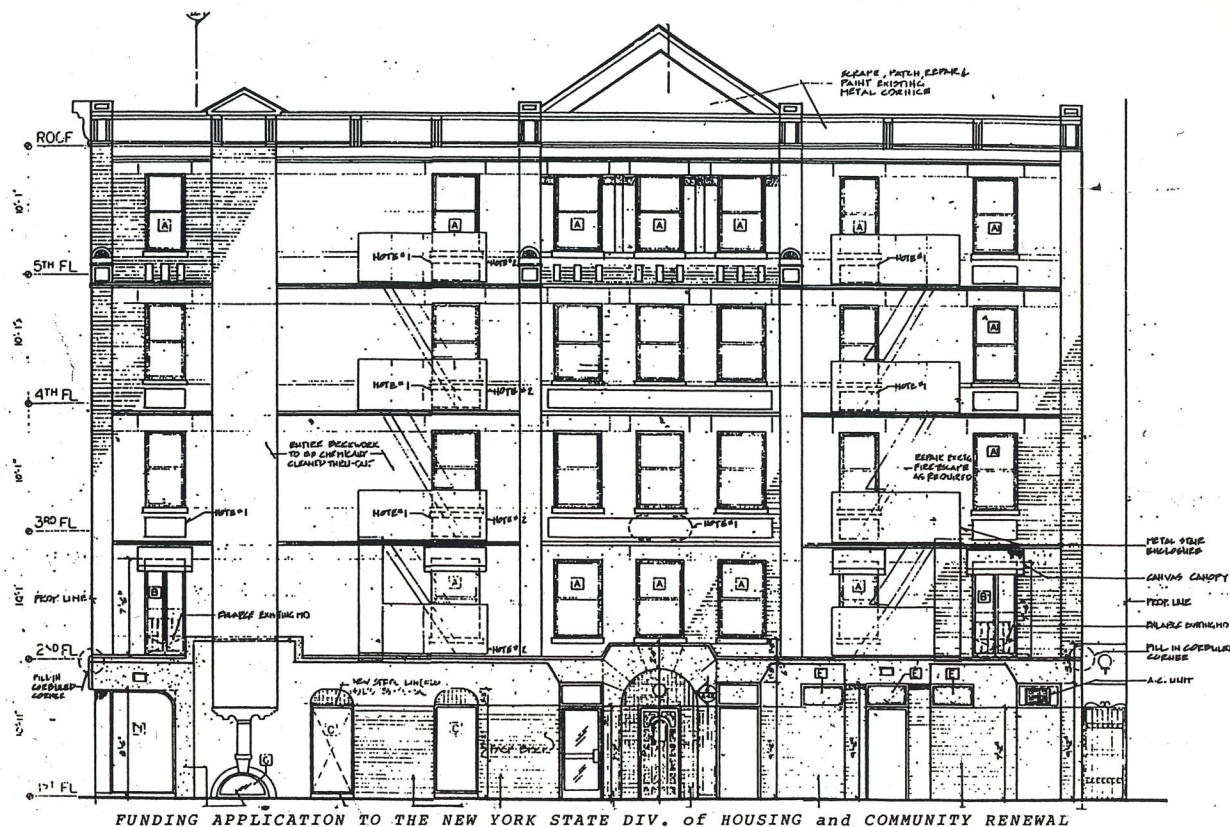
El Barrio is threatened by gentrification, which could force many Puerto Ricans to move from the area. El Taller, while continuing its artistic and educational goals is committed to community involvement, maintaining its presence in El Barrio as a symbol of the struggle of Puerto Rican people in New York City.

ÆSTHETIC DEVELOPMENT

The political, social, and aesthetic issues of the late 1980's contribute and strongly influenced the Taller aesthetic during this period. The art reflects feminist, spiritual, and political concerns.

Computer-generated work, video, and film, as well as painting, drawing, and graphics, are the predominant mediums of expression. Concepts evolved that included the projection of mass communication and the media arts, and a series of mixed-media events.

TALLER BORICUA



FUNDING APPLICATION TO THE NEW YORK STATE DIV. of HOUSING and COMMUNITY RENEWAL

URBAN INITIATIVES PROGRAM, OCTOBER 15, 1984

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

The Taller Gallery offers exhibition space to artists in the community and meeting space to community organizations.

The Taller co-directors remains involved in community development and housing projects.

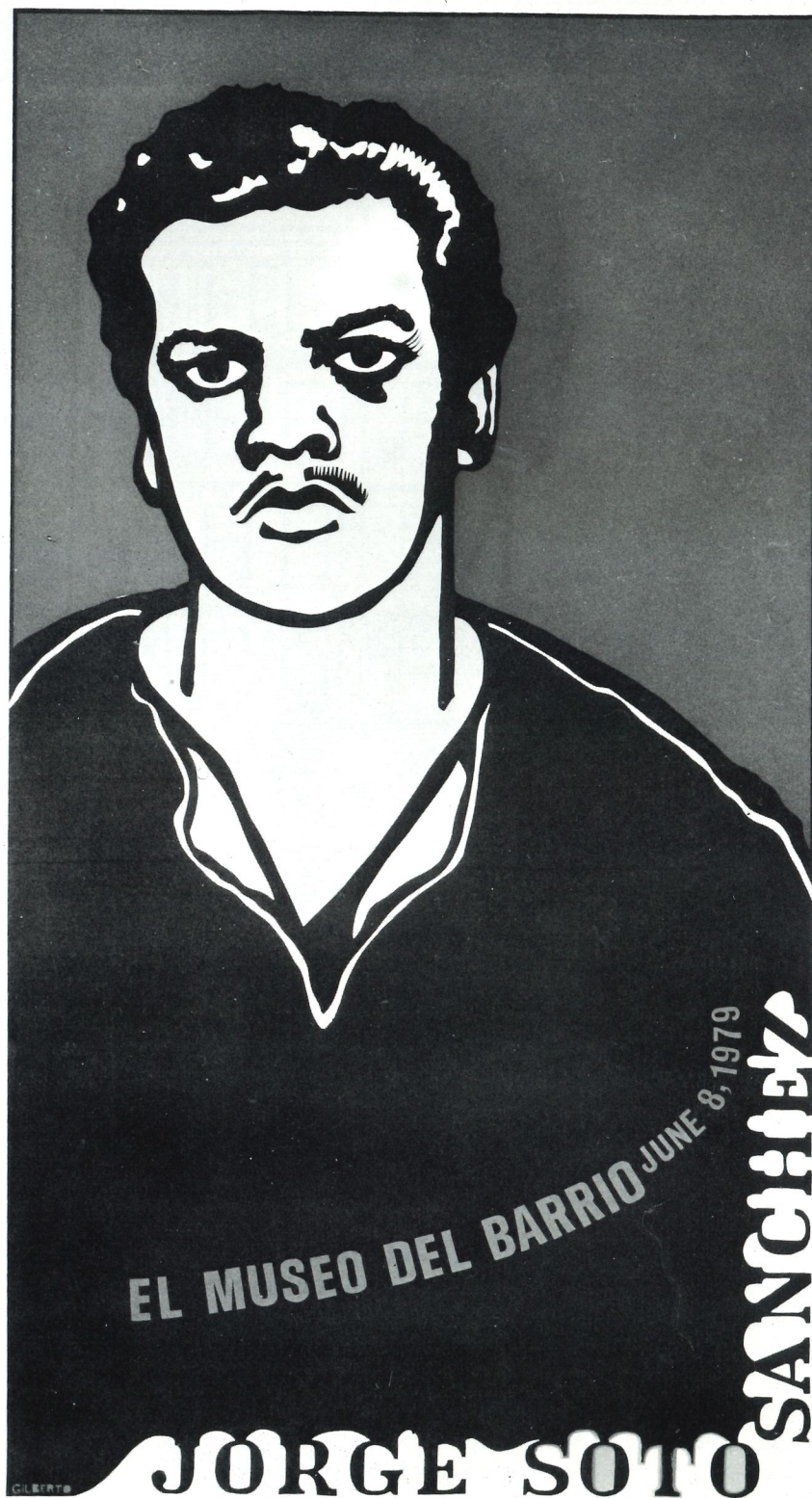
El Taller is involved with a project to develop Artists Housing Space on the corner of 106th Street and Lexington Avenue.

El Taller, in conjunction with other organizations, is also involved in the project to develop the Julia de Burgos Hispanic Cultural Center at 106th Street and Lexington Avenue.

Collaborators are East Harlem Community Board, Hispanic Housing Task Force, Department of Housing Preservation and Development, Department of Cultural Affairs, Eventos, El Museo del Barrio, Afro-Caribbean Poetry Theater, New York State Council for the Arts, National Endowment for the Arts, comité Pedro Albizu Campos, Héctor Alvarez, Rolando Cintrón, Elizabeth Grajales, Iraí Colon, Roberto Ortiz Meléndez, and José García.

Lacking time to include all the supporters of El Taller Boricua in this publication, we want to extend our gratitude to all the people who contributed to El Taller Boricua since its inception. Deep appreciation and acknowledgement is due to all of them.

■ ABOVE Proposed housing space on corner 106th Street and Lexington Avenue.



SPEAKING FROM THE UNDERGROUND

I Searched from the color of the sky
I dreamed behind my eyes
I saw my reflection there
down in the subway.
I read the news on the walls:
Samo is a cure for the bla-bashee blues.
The trains come fast
Flame Dog
Jazzy
Mad One
risks his life to paint his name
for all to see he is alive
on a welfare check
tagged at the edge
where the brain creases
folds in half
on the line separating him from me.

I remember all the times
I thought azur was a place I might be stepping into
or stopping over sometime for a look-see.
Still searching now
for a color of my own
a more subtle grade
like hothouse madness.
I am an underground root
deshabillée before a mirror in hothouse madness.
I stripped down one night
and found myself naked
in a sky of fuchsia suave.

LOIS GRIFFITH

This poem is from a series of poems Bajan Fantasies that I wrote in the late '70's, early '80's, when the Nuyorican Poets Cafe was on East 6th Street and I used to hang out with Jorge Soto, Fernando Salicrup and the fellas from Taller Boricua.

BORICUA

we are a people
 who love to love
 we are loving
 lovers who love
 to love respect,
 the best intentions
 of friendship,
 and we judge from
 the moment on, no
 matter who you are,
 and, if we find
 sincere smiles,
 we can be friends,
 and, if we have a
 drink together,
 we can be brothers,
 on the spot, no
 matter who you are,
 and we have a lot
 of black & white
 & yellow & red
 people whom we
 befriend, we're
 ready to love
 with you, that's

why we
 say, let there
 be no prejudice,
 on race, color is
 generally color-blind
 with us that's our
 contribution, all
 the colors are tied
 to our one,
 but we must fight
 the bad intentions,
 we must respect
 each others values,
 but guess what,
 we're not the only ones,
 and we offer what your
 love has taught us,
 and what you're worth
 in our self-respect,
 we are a people
 who love to love
 who are loving
 lovers who love
 to love respect.

TATO LAVIERA

written 1980 or 1981 published 1985,
AmeRican, Arte Publico Press
 University of Houston



EL TALLER BORICUA'S 11TH ANNIVERSARY DANCE ON THE ROOF

APPEARING:
ORCHESTRA BROADWAY
CHARANGA SENSUAL

FRIDAY • JULY 17

9 p.m. — 3 a.m.

1 East 104th Street • On The Roof

\$6.00 in advance • \$8.00 at door

Rums courtesy of Cocktails of Puerto Rico PHONE 831-4333

LIST OF ARTWORK SELECTED FOR THE EXHIBITION

UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED, ALL WORKS ARE PART OF THE COLLECTION OF THE ARTIST

WORKS ON PAPER

1 ALETA BASS

"Untitled", 1986.
Mixed media. 8" x 13"

2 ALETA BASS

"Untitled", 1986
Mixed media. 8" x 13"

3 MARCOS DIMAS

"Vive Che", 1972
"He Lives"
Silkscreen. 22" x 12 3/4"

4 MARCOS DIMAS

"Santiago Andrade", 1975
Portofolio, Centro de
Estudios Puertorriqueños
Silkscreen. 24" x 18"
Collection of El Taller Boricua

5 MARCOS DIMAS

"Ese Es...Ese Es...Ese Es...", 1973
"He is the One"
Silkscreen. 32 3/4" x 21 1/2"

6 MARCOS DIMAS

"Taller Puertorriqueño Inc. en
Automation House", 1972
"Puerto Rican Workshop Inc.
at Automation House"
Silkscreen. 23" X 17 1/2"

7 MARIA ESTEVES

"La Sangre Llama", 1972
"Call of the Blood"
Silkscreen. 18" x 24"
Collection of El Taller Boricua

8 SHARON FRAZIER

"Foz Do Iguasu", 1989
Pastel. 44" x 64"

9 ADRIÁN GARCÍA

"Exposición-Exhibit:
Taller Boricua", 1971
Silkscreen. 15 1/2" X 21 3/4"
Collection of Marcos Dimas

10 GERMÁN ORTIZ CADENAS

"Botón de Emergencia", 1984
"Emergency Button"
Impression from hand colored
plexiglass. 22" x 30"

11 JOSÉ RODRÍGUEZ

"Blues para Atlanta", 1981
"Blues for Atlanta"
Drawing, pen, ink and wash.
30" x 22"

12 FERNANDO SALICRUP

"Untitled", 1984
Mixed media monotype.
28 1/2" x 37"

13 FERNANDO SALICRUP

"Untitled", 1984
Mixed media monotype. 28" x 37"

14 FERNANDO SALICRUP

"Clave", 1989
"Beat"
Computer generated print.
17" x 14"

15 FERNANDO SALICRUP

"Tango Esperanza", 1989
"Tango Desire"
Computer generated print.
18" x 11 3/4"

16 FERNANDO SALICRUP

"Bag Lady", 1989
"La Mendiga"
Computer generated print.
18" x 15"

17 FERNANDO SALICRUP

"LookiYou", 1989
"Mirándote"
Computer generated print.
18" x 15"

18 FERNANDO SALICRUP

"Tú y Nadie Más que Tú", 1989
"You and No One Else"
Computer generated print.
18" x 15"

19 ARMANDO SOTO

"Taller Boricua", 1971
Silkscreen. 21" x 14 5/8"
Collection of Marcos Dimas

20 JORGE SOTO

Dedicatoria: "Para Marcos El
Areycota", 1973
Dedication: "For Marcos El Areycota"
Silkscreen. 22" x 12 3/4"
Collection of El Taller Boricua

21 JORGE SOTO

Dedicatoria: "Dibujo para Tito
con Amor", 1980
Dedication: "Drawing for Tito
with Love"
Silkscreen. 31" x 22"
Collection of El Taller Boricua

22 JORGE SOTO

"La Noticia", 1978

"The News"

Dyptich, drawing, ink. 72" x 24"

Collection of El Museo del Barrio

"TALLER BORICUA:

PORTFOLIO DE GRÁFICA, 1979"

"TALLER BORICUA:

GRAPHIC PORTFOLIO, 1979"

SILKSCREEN. 20" x 16"

8 PRINTS, EDITION OF 25

COLLECTION OF EL TALLER BORICUA

23 GILBERTO HERNÁNDEZ

"El Poeta"

"The Poet"

24 FERNANDO SALICRUP

"Mendigo Político"

"Political Beggar"

25 GILBERTO HERNÁNDEZ

"Marta y Gilberto"

26 JORGE SOTO

"Maria"

27 JORGE SOTO

"Fa Brutto Tempo"

"Si Bruttissimo, y la Patria?"

28 MARCOS DIMAS

"New York City Rain"

"Lluvia en Nueva York"

29 FERNANDO SALICRUP

"Amor en Ti"

"Love in You"

30 MARCOS DIMAS

"Pez Pluma con Arco"

"Feather Fish with Bow"

31 RAFAEL TUFÍÑO

"Taller Alma Boricua", 1970

Silkscreen. 23" x 17 1/2"

Collection of Taller Boricua

32 MANUEL VEGA

"Tributo a Ismael Cortijo", 1983

"Tribute to Ismael Cortijo"

Proposed study for mural.

Watercolor on board. 28" x 21"

33 MANUEL VEGA

"Tributo a Mon Rivera", 1983

"Tribute to Mon Rivera"

Proposed study for a mural.

Watercolor on board. 28" x 21"

34 MANUEL VEGA

"A la buena si, a la mala no"

Silkscreen. 22 1/2" x 17"

Collection of El Museo del Barrio

■ **PHOTOGRAPHS**

35 JOSÉ A. VÁZQUEZ

"Mi Gallo Bola", 1976

Silver gelatin print. 16" x 20"

36 JOSÉ A. VÁZQUEZ

"Modesto", 1975

Silver gelatin print. 16" x 20"

■ **PAINTINGS**

1 RAMÓN ABDIAS GONZÁLEZ

"Guazipungo", 1975

Acrylic on canvas. 48" x 48"

2 RAFAEL COLÓN MORALES

"Hueso I", 1973

"Bone I"

Oil on canvas. 40" x 42"

Collection of El Museo del Barrio

3 FÉLIX CORDERO

"Fiesta de Máscaras", 1986

"Mask Celebration"

Acrylic on canvas. 48" x 120"

4 MARCOS DIMAS

"Pariah", 1971-72

Oil on canvas. 65" x 54"

5 MARCOS DIMAS

"Fuego Indígena", 1974

"Indian Fire"

Oil on canvas. 60 1/2" x 37 1/2"

6 MARCOS DIMAS

"Iguanas", 1970

Collage, oil and paper on canvas.

48" x 43"

7 MARCOS DIMAS

"Untitled", 1986

Oil on canvas. 80" x 58"

8 ADRIÁN GARCÍA

"El Canto", 1989

"The Chant"

Polypitch, acrylic, spray enamel

and litho ink on canvas. 36" x 38"

9 GILBERTO HERNÁNDEZ

"Plants", 1974

"Plantas"

Acrylic on canvas.

57 1/2" x 36 1/2"

Collection of El Museo del Barrio

- 10 MIRIAM HERNÁNDEZ**
 "Second Thoughts", 1989
 "Dudas"
 Construction, acrylic and plastic on canvas. 29" x 22"
- 11 LEE KLEINER**
 "Metamorfosearse", 1983
 "Metamorphose"
 Acrylic on canvas. 87" x 47"
- 12 JESÚS (JAY) MUÑIZ**
 "Naturaleza Muerta con Guantes, Sombrero y Bufanda", 1981
 "Still Life of Gloves, Hat and Scarf"
 Acrylic on canvas. 25" x 25"
- 13 JAY MUÑIZ**
 "Untitled", 1984
 Acrylic on Canvas. 46" x 44"
- 14 JOSÉ MORALES**
 "El Sábado", 1982-85
 "Saturday"
 Dyptich, oil on linen and photograph on board. 96" x 112"
- 15 CARLOS OSORIO**
 "Paisaje con Figura", 1970
 "Landscape with Figure"
 Oil over acrylic and sand on homosote board. 38" x 89"
 Collection of El Museo del Barrio
- 16 CARLOS OSORIO**
 "Simbolos que Nos Joden", 1973
 "Signs That Fuck Us Up"
 Oil over acrylic and sand on canvas 24" x 12 1/2"
 Collection of El Museo del Barrio
- 17 CARLOS OSORIO**
 "Fachada I", 1973
 "Facade I"
 Acrylic on paper. 24" x 18"
 Collection of El Museo del Barrio
- 18 CARLOS OSORIO**
 "Fachada II", 1973
 "Facade II"
 Acrylic on paper. 24" x 18"
 Collection of El Museo del Barrio
- 19 CARLOS OSORIO**
 "Figura V", 1973
 "Figure V"
 Acrylic on paper. 40" x 25 1/2"
 Collection of El Museo del Barrio
- 20 MANUEL OTERO**
 "Retrato de Albizu Campos", 1970
 "Portrait of Albizu Campos"
 Acrylic on homosote. 96" x 48"
 Collection of Néstor Otero
- 21 NÉSTOR OTERO**
 "Acicate", 1982
 (One pointed spur)
 mixed media construction.
 36" x 24"
- 22 MARTÍN (TITO) PÉREZ**
 "Untitled", 1972-74
 Artist's body print
 Acrylic on canvas. 36" x 24"
 Collection of El Museo del Barrio
- 23 GLORIA RODRÍGUEZ**
 "Viajero", 1981
 "Voyager"
 Collage, acrylic and paper on canvas. 58" x 48"
- 24 GLORIA RODRÍGUEZ**
 "Después que el Artista se Muere", 1982
 "After the Artist Dies"
- Acrylic on canvas. 12" x 12"
- 25 EDWIN (PITRE) RODRÍGUEZ**
 "Meylin", 1989
 Dyptich, oil on canvas. 50" x 120"
- 26 FERNANDO SALICRUP**
 "Una Vez Más Columbus", 1976
 "One More Time Columbus"
 Acrylic on linen. 54" x 44"
 Collection of El Museo del Barrio
- 27 FERNANDO SALICRUP**
 "Despierta Boricua", 1977
 "Wake Up Boricua"
 Acrylic on canvas. 75 1/4" x 44 1/2"
- 28 FERNANDO SALICRUP**
 "Espíritu de Martín", 1974
 "Martin's Spirit"
 Acrylic on linen. 68" x 61"
- 29 ARMANDO SOTO**
 "Untitled", 1971
 Proposed study for mural.
 Acrylic on linen. 66" x 48"
- 30 ARMANDO SOTO**
 "Untitled", 1970
 Acrylic and spray enamel on linen.
 45" x 71"

- 31 ELAINE SOTO**
 "De León", 1989
 Acrylic on linen. 68" x 50"
- 32 JORGE SOTO**
 "Untitled", 1981
 Acrylic on canvas. 57 1/2" x 115"
 Collection of El Taller Boricua
- 33 JORGE SOTO**
 "Untitled", 1982
 Acrylic on canvas. 63" x 134"
 Estate of the Artist
- 34 NITZA TUFIÑO**
 "Pareja Taina", 1972
 "Taino Couple"
 Acrylic, charcoal and polyurethane
 on masonite 48" x 48"
 Collection of El Museo del Barrio
- 35 NITZA TUFIÑO**
 "Bodegón", 1974
 "Still Life"
 Acrylic, charcoal pastel, and
 polyurethane
 on masonite. 48" x 28"
 Collection of El Museo del Barrio

- 37 RAFAEL TUFIÑO**
 "Untitled", 1970
 (Orants Day 1970, Spring is Here)
 Tempera on paper.
 29 1/2" x 21 3/4"
 Collection of El Museo del Barrio

■ 3-DIMENSIONAL WORK

- 1 MARCOS DIMAS**
 "Trampa para Espíritus", 1974
 "Spirit Trap"
 Mixed media. Free standing
 sculpture
 49" x 33" x 3"
 Collection of El Museo del Barrio
- 2 MARCOS DIMAS**
 "El Viajero", 1981
 "The Voyager"
 Mixed media. 36" x 38" x 96"
- 3 NÉSTOR OTERO**
 "Acecho", 1983
 (Lurking, Waiting in Ambush)
 Mixed media, wall sculpture.
 77 1/2" x 41" x 11/2"

- 4 JORGE SOTO**
 "Autoretrato", 1974
 "Self Portrait"
 Mixed media. 49" x 33" x 3"
 Collection of El Museo del Barrio
- 5 JORGE SOTO**
 "Tom and Gill", 1982
 Mixed media. Free standing
 sculpture.
 80" x 60" x 16 1/2"
 Collection of El Museo del Barrio
- 6 SHOKO TANAKA**
 "Untitled", 1989
 Construction, oil on wood and
 canvas. 3" x 36" x 71"
- 7 RAFAEL TUFIÑO**
 "Taller Alma Boricua", 1970
 Wood Carving. 2" x 3" x 36"
 Collection of Armando Soto

LIST OF EVENTS ORGANIZED FOR THE EXHIBITION

TALLER ALMA BORICUA:

Reflecting on Twenty Years of the Puerto Rican Workshop.

A colloquium in which guest critics explored El Taller from historical, aesthetic and socio-political perspectives, *Saturday, October 21, 1989.*

Participants:

Aesthetics Manifestations: Rafael Montañez Ortiz

Socio-Political Implications: Lucy Lippard

Moderator: Susana Torruella Leval

Organized by the Education Department of El Museo del Barrio.

MIGRANT METAPHORS

Two readings by contemporary poets and writers whose works reflect the Puerto Rican and Caribbean experience in New York City and their close relationships with El Taller for the last twenty years, which took place *Thursday, October 26 at the Cathedral St. John the Divine*, and *Friday, November 3, 1989 at the Museo del Barrio.*

Participants:

Miguel Algarín, Américo Casiano, Iraí Colón, Lois Griffith, Sandra Esteves, Tato Laviera, Angeluis Méndez, Roberto Ortiz Meléndez, Pedro Pietri.

Organized by the Education Department of El Museo del Barrio and the Arts Program at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine.

A limited edition of 500 of this catalog is available with a companion audio cassette of the poetry readings.

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"Arte en Museo del Barrio." (Photo Caption). *El Diario-La Prensa*, November 4, 1981, p.6.

"Día de Solidaridad." (Photo Caption), *El Diario-La Prensa*, November 9, 1981, p.10.

"Dimas y su Media Luna." (Photo Caption), *El Diario-La Prensa*, November 9, 1981, p.4.

CREDITS

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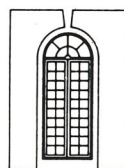
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Assistant Commissioner
NYC Department of Cultural Affairs

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