THE YOUNG LORDS WAY

YASMIN RAMÍREZ

Culture, see, is the gun.
—Pablo "Yoruba" Guzmán

On Saturday July 26, 2014, multitudes of former Young Lords members and present-day activists gathered in front of the First Spanish United Methodist Church to celebrate the renaming of East 111th Street and Lexington Avenue to Young Lords Way. The event represented a victory for the former Young Lords and present-day barrio stakeholders who spent years petitioning the city to recognize the multivalent history of this sacred space in East Harlem. As the sign went up before a cheering crowd, I reflected on its evocative wording. Young Lords Way invites spectators to consider the Young Lords' impact on New York in a twofold manner. First, it designates the site where over three thousand people gathered for eleven days in late December 1969 to support their takeover of the church after its pastor refused to let the Young Lords launch a free breakfast program for the neighborhood children. "The People's Church Offensive," as the Young Lord's called it, signaled the beginning of the Puerto Rican empowerment movement in New York—the Nuyorican equivalent of the "shot heard round the world" that began the American Revolution. Second, Young Lords Way demarcates a path that the Young Lords trail-blazed, a culturally engaged way of grassroots organizing that has had a lasting impact on generations of activists and artists. In the words of Iris Morales, former Young Lords Party (YLP) deputy minister of education:

> We understood the power of mobilization and believed it necessary for our collective survival. . . . The information ministry skillfully communicated our message through the *Palante* newspaper and pamphlets; a weekly radio show on WBAI, the New York Pacific radio station, and press conferences. We joined many artists, poets, and musicians to create revolutionary political culture. We collaborated with other Puerto

Hatuey Ramos-Fermín
Vine Pa' Echar Candela (I Came to Fuel a Fire), 2015
Bronx Office Installation
Dimension variable
Courtesy of the artist

Rican activists in the Movement Pro Independence, El Comite, and the Puerto Rican Student Union, among others, and with people of color organizations, most closely with the Black Panther Party, I Wor Kuen, the Third World Women's Alliance, as well as white progressives . . .. We woke up each day to serve the people and went to sleep analyzing what we had accomplished, and at night we dreamt about the new society that we would create, convinced that the richest country on the globe had the resources needed to sustain a better world for everyone.[1]

Installation image of *Presente! The Young Lords in New York*
The Bronx Museum of the Arts, 2015
Courtesy Peter Gregoire

¡Presente!

Coincident with the fiftieth anniversary of the passage of the Civil Rights Act, *¡Presente! The Young Lords in New York* gathers posters, art, films, photos, and paraphernalia that reflect the revolutionary political culture spearheaded by the Young Lords. In keeping with the coalition building that the Young Lords practiced, *¡Presente!* forged a partnership between the Bronx Museum, Loisaida Inc., and the Museo del Barrio—institutions located in neighborhoods where the Young Lords set up offices. Each institution created site-specific exhibitions based on the Young Lords' activism in the area.

Cocurated with Johanna Fernández, the Bronx Museum exhibition features documentary photographs by Michael Abramson, Máximo Colón, Fred W. McDarrah, Joe Conzo, and Jamel Shabazz; reprints of the Young Lords newspaper, *Palante*; and a reconceptualization of the Young Lords Bronx headquarters created by Hatuey Ramos-Fermín, director of education at the Bronx Museum. Vintage films, posters, and prints from the Taller Boricua collective as well as photographs by Adal, Geno Rodriguez, and Jan van Raay highlight the intersections between the Young Lords and visual artists who catalyzed the Puerto Rican art movement aka the Nuyorican art movement in New York during the 1970s. The show concludes with a selection of works by artists whose practice evokes aspects of the Young Lords' visual culture and activist ideology: Sophia Dawson, Shepard Fairey, Yasmin Hernandez, Miguel Luciano, Caecilia Tripp, and Juan Sánchez.

The abundance of material culture produced by and about the Young Lords over the past forty-five years is staggering, especially when one considers that the group's peak period of activism occurred over a period of merely five years, between 1969 and 1973. What made the Young Lords way of mobilizing so successful in the past and why do the Young Lords continue to intrigue us today? Social movements, according to T. V. Reed, generate a repertoire of strategies, tactics, expressions, behaviors, and material objects to create cohesion among participants and disseminate their ideas to the wider public. Reed calls this matrix of actions and objects "movement culture" and observes that the most impactful movement cultures utilize the arts to alter or transgress dominant cultural codes.[2]

An Army of Beautiful Rebels

The Young Lords' prominence in our collective imagination of the 1970s is due in large part to their transgressive yet visually compelling movement culture. The cross-disciplinary talent pool in the Young Lord's central committee factored into their ability to continuously draw attention and sympathy to their causes. Comprised of first-generation college-educated Black and Puerto Rican men and women from working-class households, the Young Lord's leadership circle—which included Juan González, Felipe Luciano, Pablo "Yoruba" Guzmán, Denise Oliver, Hiram Maristany, and Iris Morales—brimmed with creative aptitudes. Gonzalez, minister of education, acquired his media-savvy during the Columbia student protests of 1968. Luciano, chairman, was a former member of the Last Poets, a Black Power performance poetry troupe. Luciano and Guzmán, minister of information, were the group's charismatic spokesmen. Oliver, revolutionary artist and minister of economic development, designed many early posters and illustrations that appeared in *Palante*. Maristany, who led photography workshops in East Harlem prior to joining the group, was the YLP in-house photographer. His images of demonstrations and daily happenings in the YLP offices were often featured in *Palante*. The Young Lords also recognized the seminal Nuyorican poet and playwright, Pedro Pietri, as their poet laureate. Pietri's epic poem, *Puerto Rican Obituary*, became an anthem in the Young Lords movement. By turns

Máximo Colón
Untitled, c. 1970
Silver gelatin print
Courtesy of the artist

sad and satiric, the poem expressed mourning for Puerto Ricans in New York who die without having a sense of self worth and knowledge of the beauty of their origins.

The members of the central committee deployed their talents to portray Puerto Rican culture as resilient and reframe Puerto Rican youth culture in New York—pejoratively associated with delinquency and gangsterism—as comprised of organized troops of socially conscious young adults who were unafraid to defy authority in defense of the Puerto Rican people. As Guzmán put it: "The fact that our people, when put against the wall, have managed to kick ass for centuries—that is good, that is part of our culture, right. That's why we say that the most cultural thing we can do is pick up the gun to defend ourselves. Culture, see, is the gun—as long as we understand that it is not the gun that should control us but the Party should control the gun."[3]

Dressed in purple berets, leather jackets, dark clothing, combat boots, and buttons emblazoned with a rifle superimposed on the Puerto Rican flag, the Young Lords paramilitary dress code inverted mainstream stereotypes of Puerto Ricans as a docile, insular people. "To counter a politico-symbolic economy that barred Puerto Ricans from city resources, the Young Lords worked hard to produce a different body for Puerto Ricans," writes Frances Negron, "a strong body guided by a new consciousness

Sophia Dawson
Palante, 2015
Acrylic and collage on canvas
66 x 90 inches
Courtesy of the artist

that could take control of its destiny by discipline, organization, and coordinated action."[4]

The female members of the Young Lords rejected the second-class status that women were accorded in society—even among progressive and radical groups like the Black Panthers. They fought for and won leadership positions and made gender equality a priority of the Young Lords platform. Sophia Dawson's mixed media installation *Revolution within the Revolution* (2015), created in collaboration with members of the Young Lords Women Caucus, integrates illustrations, photographs, and texts to relate the accomplishments of the women in the YLP.

Flaunting their affiliation with the Black Panthers and other radical leftist organizations of color, the Young Lords could also be seen wearing Afros, braids, dashikis, and Panther pins. The Young Lords' sartorial affirmation of their African and Native American (Indio) ancestries challenged the Puerto Rican community's internalized shame of being mixed-race people and projected a more complex, heterogeneous understanding of Puerto Rican identity that younger generations have since embraced.

Yasmin Hernandez
Carpeta: Richie Perez* from the series *Archivos Subversivos (Subversive Archives), 2007
Mixed media on manila file folder
18 x 12 inches
Courtesy of the artist

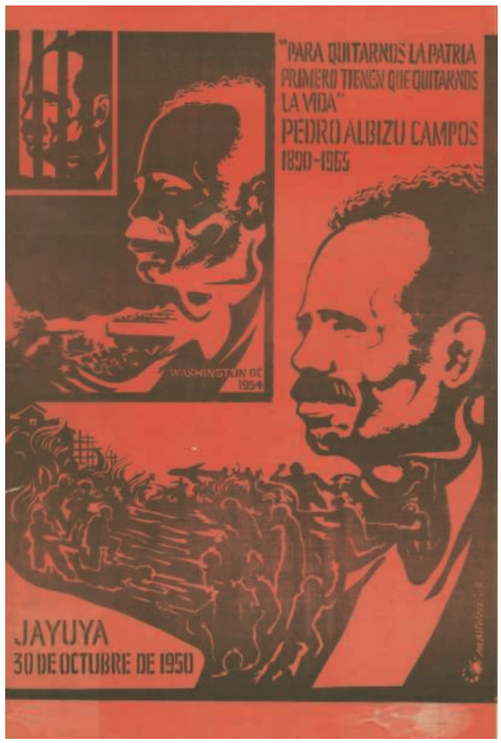
As numerous photographs in *¡Presente!* demonstrate, the Young Lords attracted some of the brightest and best-looking young adults in the city. They were an army of beautiful rebels who could disarm their critics by flashing smiles as they marched down the city's streets. Their ability to look good while doing "bad" deeds brought them notoriety in the barrios and broadcast studios. Media outlets in the United States and Europe flocked to film the Young Lords' spectacular occupations. Third World Newsreel's brilliant documentary *El Pueblo Se Levanta* combines music and poetry and avant-garde film techniques like jump cuts and montages to convey the spectrum of socio-aesthetic actions that were going on at the People's Church Offensive and other demonstrations. *El Pueblo Se Levanta*, as well as Morales's documentary film about the YLP, *P'alante*, *Siempre P'alante*, was screened daily at the Bronx Museum.

A Passion for Art and Social Justice

While films allow us to relive dramatic moments in the movement, photographs offer opportunities for reflection and close observation. Michael Abramson, Hiram Maristany, Máximo Colón, and Fred W. McDarrah among others, created insightful photo essays of daily life in the YLP. What became evident to me after looking at these photos, is that in addition to coding their bodies with signs of their political solidarities, the Young Lords flooded their surroundings with images that conveyed the main principles of their 13-point platform and program:

> We want self determination for Puerto Ricans, liberation on the island and inside the United States; (4) we are revolutionary nationalists and oppose racism (5) we want equality for women; down with machismo and male chauvinism (6) we want community control of our institutions and land (7) we want a true education of our Afro-Indo Culture and Spanish Language (10) We want

freedom for all political prisoners and prisoners of war (12) we are internationalists (13) We want liberation, clothing, free food, education health care, transportation, full employment and peace.[5]



Young Lords Party
Back Cover of *Palante*
Printed May 1970
Courtesy of Tamiment Library and Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, New York University

Photographs of the Young Lords storefront offices demonstrate that the windows were covered in posters that put the underground history of Puerto Rican liberation struggles on permanent public display. The offices in the Bronx, East Harlem, and the Lower East Side featured numerous posters commemorating Pedro Albizu Campos, president of Puerto Rico's pro-independence Nationalist Party from 1930 to 1965. A gifted orator, Albizu Campos was known in Puerto Rico as "El Maesto" (the teacher). His death in 1965 caused an outpouring of portraits in his honor rendered by Puerto Rico's master printmakers.[6] An outstanding work that was featured in the Bronx Young Lords office was Antonio Martorell's silkscreen, *Jauyua 30 de Octubre de 1950* (1969). Depicting revolutionaries emerging from Albizu Campos's outstretched arm, the poster references two nationalist uprisings that put him in prison for years: the Jayuya uprising in 1950 and the armed attack on members of the US House of Representatives in 1954. As Michael Abramson's photographs of the Bronx Office in 1970 show, *Jauyua 30 de Octubre de 1950* was placed beside a large photo of Malcolm X. This visual parallel between the two leaders was intentional, offering a summation of the Young Lords' position papers that placed their alliance with the Black Panthers into a historical perspective of shared oppressions, ideals, and tactics between Puerto Rican and African American freedom fighters.

Active in pro-independence political circles on the island, Martorell recalls sending a box of *Jauyua 30 de octubre de 1950* posters to the Young Lords as a sign of solidarity. Given its symbolic importance and graphic excellence, *Jauyua 30 de Octubre de 1950* also hung in the window of the East Harlem office and was reproduced on the front page of *Palante*, making it one of the few works by a Puerto Rican printmaker that had wide circulation in New York city at that time.

Written for a bilingual audience, *Palante* filled a vacuum for the New York Puerto Rican community, especially its youth, who were searching for information about their heritage. In addition to articles about YLP demonstrations which readers were urged to attend, *Palante* also published illustrated essays about Puerto Rican history and culture. Indeed, during the first two years of its publication, *Palante* resembled a zine with full-page color illustrations or photographs on the front and back plus a centerfold, a layout design that made it easy for readers to repurpose the newspaper's images in their own posters and collages.

Rafael Tufiño was another Puerto Rican printmaker whose posters could be seen in the Young Lords offices in East Harlem. Born in Brooklyn, New York, raised in San Juan, Puerto Rico, and trained as an artist in Mexico City, Tufiño drew on his broad background to foster an artistic renaissance on the island during the 1950s that was akin to the Mexican renaissance in early twentieth century. A versatile modernist who worked in abstract and figurative modes, Tufiño was best known for his archetypical renderings of Puerto Rico's folk culture which earned him the title of "El Pintor del

Marcos Dimas
En el espíritu de Betances (In the spirit of Betances), 1971
Reproduced in *Palante*, September 1971
Courtesy of Tamiment Library and Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, New York University

Pueblo" (the people's painter). Seen within the context of the Young Lords' politically charged window displays, Tufiño's popular images of caramel-colored farmers and black folk singers were recoded as portraits of the island's revolutionary proletariat.

Nitza Tufiño surmised that her father donated his posters to the Young Lords since he was working at Taller Boricua, a radical artist-run printmaking collective in East Harlem. Still in operation today, Taller Boricua was founded during the fall of 1970 by Marcos Dimas, Adrian Garcia, Martin Rubio, Armando Soto, and Manuel Neco Otero, all of whom were recent college graduates. Master printmakers Rafael Tufiño and Carlos Osorio joined soon after its inception. Nitza Tufiño became the first woman artist in the collective.[7]

Taller Boricua was a central meeting place for the Puerto Rican creative community in New York during the 1970s. Originally located across the street from the Young Lords' offices, the artists who gathered at Taller Boricua saw themselves as activists and were dedicated to creating art for the people. Although the Young Lords and Taller Boricua operated as distinct organizations, the personal interactions and artistic borrowings between them fostered awareness and appreciation for Puerto Rico's history and culture. Posters by Rafael Tufiño hung in the Young Lords' offices and Dimas's poster of the nineteenth-century independence leader Ramón Emeterio Betances was reproduced in *Palante*. Likewise, the actions of the Young Lords and the front pages of *Palante* became sources of inspiration for Taller members. The collective organized traveling exhibits in Latino neighborhoods throughout the city, hosted free printmaking

Jan van Raay
Protest at the Museum of Modern Art, 1970
Courtesy of the artist

workshops, and created posters for community events and political rallies such as the massive march to the United Nations in support of Puerto Rican independence led by the Young Lords on October 30, 1970. Taller Boricua's street actions were complemented by a dedicated studio practice. The artists exceeded the Young Lords' demand for a true education in Puerto Rico's African and indigenous Taíno heritages by creating a visual vocabulary that combined forms from both cultures. The Afro-Taíno aesthetic became Taller Boricua's signature style.

Conversations with Dimas and Nitza Tufiño dispelled assumptions that the spatial proximity and appearance of the Taller posters in Young Lords' rallies, offices, and newspapers indicated that they were close allies. Dimas recalls being surprised and a little miffed that his portrait of Ramón Emeterio Betances appeared on a cover of *Palante* in September 1971 without his permission, especially because the image was cropped to remove the shotgun that Dimas had placed in Betances's hands.

> No one came over to ask me whether they could put my poster on the cover and cut some of it off. Maybe they didn't know it was mine. It was a crazy time, we [were] all doing lots things at once. We would put our posters out on the street and do free workshops for the people so it was okay by me that the Young Lords appropriated the poster—I think they would have described it as liberating my work. We were all part of the same scene, held similar beliefs. We took part in the large demonstrations but we didn't attend each other's meetings or anything.They were doing their revolution over there and we [were] doing ours over here.[8]

The revolution that Dimas and other Taller members were waging at that time was aimed at getting cultural equity for women and artists of color in New York. In addition to founding Taller Boricua, Dimas, Garcia, and Rubio Soto were involved with the Art Workers' Coalition (AWC), an umbrella organization comprised of politically conscious artists engaged in antiwar and civil rights struggles. Together with artist Raphael Montañez Ortiz, the founder of El Museo del Barrio, the Puerto Rican AWC collaborated with members of the Black Emergency Cultural Coalition on institutional reforms for New York City museums. Their input is reflected in the March 1970 revision of the AWC's thirteen demands to the Museum of Modern Art:

> 2. Admission to all museums should be free all the time, and they should be open evenings to accommodate working people.
>
> 3. All museums should decentralize to the extent that their activities and services enter Black, Puerto Rican, and all other communities. They should support events with which these communities can identify with and that they control. They should convert existing structures all over the city into cheap flexible branch museums or cultural centers that do not carry the stigma of catering only to the wealthier sections of society.
>
> 4. A section of all museums under the direction of Black and Puerto Rican artists should be devoted to showing the accomplishments of Black and Puerto Rican artists.[9]

The peak period of AWC activism (1969–1971) was concurrent with the Young Lords' biggest mobilizations. During the spring and summer of 1970, the Young Lords were seizing TB-testing trucks in East Harlem and taking over Lincoln Hospital in the Bronx. At the same time, the Black and Puerto Rican art workers were picketing the

Museum of Modern Art to open a Martin Luther King/Pedro Albizu Campos Wing and occupying the director's office at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in an effort to get Tomas Hoving to decentralize the museum's collections and support community-based art spaces like El Museo del Barrio and the Studio Museum in Harlem. Of course, the Museum of Modern Art never built a Martin Luther King/Pedro Albizu Campos Wing. After the AWC sit-in, however, the Metropolitan Museum of Art hired Irvine MacManus to serve as a Puerto Rican community liaison. MacManus was instrumental in helping emergent cultural institutions like El Museo del Barrio receive loans and other resources from the museum.

Máximo Colón
Takeover of WNET/Channel 13, 1972
Silver gelatin print
Courtesy of the artist

The degree of separation between the Young Lords, Taller Boricua, and El Museo del Barrio decreased after Marta Moreno Vega became director of El Museo del Barrio in 1971. During her extraordinary tenure, Young Lords photographer Hiram Maristany—together with Adrian Garcia, Manuel Neco Otero, and Nitza Tufiño from Taller Boricua—joined El Museo del Barrio's staff. This radical dream team organized groundbreaking exhibitions and museum education programs whose themes indicated that the Young Lords' movement culture was inspiring a formidable art movement: *Homage to Our Painters* (1972), *Taíno* (1972), *The Art Heritage of Puerto Rico: Pre-Columbian to the Present* (1973), *The History of Puerto Rican Posters* (1973), *Aspectos de la Esclavud en Puerto Rico* (1974), and *Art as Survival* (1974).

Although the AWC had disbanded by 1971, Taller members continued to participate in demonstrations to obtain representation of Puerto Ricans in mainstream cultural venues in coalition with other groups. The most notable among those groups was the Puerto Rican Education and Media Action Coalition (PREMAC), which staged a takeover of PBS Channel 13 in June 1972. The action resulted in funding for *Realidades*, an innovative program on Puerto Rican and Latino arts and culture that was broadcast on Channel 13 in the mid-1970s. The PREMAC protest also compelled WNET to offer training in filmmaking and television production to Puerto Ricans, Latinos, and African Americans. Dimas and photographer Máximo Colón, among others, attended the WNET film and television school, and later became producers for Realidades. Dimas's experimental film on Puerto Rican artists in New York, *Towards a Collective Expression*, was broadcast on Realidades in 1975. Rarely screened afterward, the Bronx Museum commissioned Dimas to create a newly edited digital version of the film.

A Progressive Legacy

In retrospect, it is apparent that Taller Boricua, El Museo del Barrio, and the Young Lords mutually benefited from the activism that each organization was engaged in during the early 1970s. The demands for cultural equity that Puerto Rican artists were voicing in front of museums and broadcast studios would have rung hollow without the uproar that the Young Lords were causing in other parts of the city. Likewise, without the aesthetic contributions of the arts community, the impact of the Young Lords movement to empower the people of the barrios with a new consciousness of their

culture could well have perished when the party began to experience conflicts within its ranks in the early 1970s and ultimately dissolved in 1976. What happened instead is that Puerto Rican alternative art spaces kept the Young Lords' legacy alive via exhibitions, performances, and education projects that foregrounded the social, political, and aesthetic ideals of progressive African Americans, Puerto Ricans, and Latinos in the United States. Among the most notable organizations that arose during the 1970s and 1980s are: the Institute of Contemporary Hispanic Art (1973), En Foco (1974), The Nuyorican Poets Café (1975), Galeria Tito (1975), The Alternative Museum (1975), Cayman Gallery (1975), the Association of Hispanic Arts (1975), the Caribbean Culture Center (1976), the New Rican Village (1976), Galeria Morivi (1977), Charas/El Bohio (1979), Exit Art (1982), Longwood Arts Projects (1981), the Museum of Contemporary Hispanic Art (1986), and Eventos: Space for Living Artists (1987).

Two former Young Lords members, Eddie Figueroa and Luis Garden Acosta, founded organizations that directly linked the YLP to the "Latino Left Cultural Front," as my esteemed colleague Wilson Valentine calls the network of largely Puerto Rican alternative art spaces in New York that emerged in the 1970s and 1980s. Eddie Figueroa began the New Rican Village in 1976. Located on Avenue A and East 6th Street, New Rican Village operated as a multiarts learning center during the day and hosted experimental theater, dance, and Latin Jazz performances at night. The New Rican Village was a downtown home for the Taller artists and Pedro Pietri, who collaborated with Figeroa on events like *The South Bronx Surrealist Festival* and *The Spirit Republic of Puerto Rico/The Puerto Rican Embassy*. These multidisciplinary happenings engaged audiences in reconceiving the Puerto Rican condition of dislocation on the US mainland as opportunities for reimagining notions of nationhood, place, and belonging. Poet and printmaker Sandra María Esteves, an affiliate of Taller Boricua in the early 1970s, designed numerous event posters for the New Rican Village and organized its poetry workshops. Adal's striking black-and-white portraits of Eddie Figueroa and Pedro Pietri in 1989 capture the flamboyant characters of these two multitalented artists. After Figueroa's death, Adal partnered with Pietri to restage Puerto Rican Embassy events and created an ongoing body of work called *Blueprints for a Nation* (1994–present) that explores, at times satirically, the persistent quest for political independence and unity among Puerto Ricans on the island and the mainland.

Sandra María Esteves
New Rican Village August Arts Festival, 1977
Offset print
24 x 18 inches
Courtesy of the artist

In 1982, Acosta and Frances Lucerna, a former dancer and arts educator, cofounded El Puente, a human rights institution that promotes leadership for peace and justice. Located in Los Sures, the Puerto Rican section of Williamsburg, Brooklyn, El Puente began as a coalition to prevent gang violence and has grown into an organization that operates a network of bilingual leadership training centers for adults and teens in North Brooklyn. El Puente organizes collaborations between artists and local schools to produce curricula and theme-based art projects that promote human rights and social action. The center also administers El Puente Academy for Peace and Justice, a public high school that promotes social justice and an arts-based curriculum. In 2014, El Puente's tenth graders had a remarkable exhibit at El Museo del Barrio that validated the school's pedagogic approach. After studying the visual culture of European imperialism and works by contemporary artists such as

ADÁL
Portrait of Eddie Figueroa, 1989
Digital print
24 x 24 inches
Courtesy of the artist

Kehinde Wilde, Yinka Shonibare, and Mickalene Thomas, the students created *Portraits of Power* (2014), an installation of self-portraits that critically reflected on the way history, race, and class informed their sense of self and mode of dress.

El Puente's student body is living proof that the Young Lords way of using visual culture to inform, transform, and empower people—especially young people—is still relevant today. The sneaker fetishism that prevails in Black and Latino youth culture became a source of inspiration and means of intervention for Miguel Luciano, a former teacher at El Puente. Luciano's *Filiberto Ojeda Uptowns/Machereto Air Force Ones* (2007) is a customized pair of Nike sneakers that pay tribute to Filiberto Ojeda Ríos, the assassinated leader of the Macheteros, a clandestine group of Puerto Rican nationalists who arose after the demise of the Young Lords and campaigned for Puerto Rican independence in the late 1970s and 1980s. "A pair of Nike sneakers become an unlikely vehicle of veneration for a fallen leader that both complicate and question how nationalism and resistance are embodied within today's colonial consumerist society," writes Luciano. "Nevertheless they engage [in] alternative strategies towards reconstructing symbols of resistance from the objects of material desire, while questioning the commodification of revolution. The *Machetero Air Force Ones* transform Nike's Swoosh logo into a ready-made Machete, as the mantra of Nike's 'goddess of victory' gives way to 'hasta la victoria siempre.'"[10]

Juan Sánchez's mixed-media tribute to the Young Lords, *Once We Were Warriors* (2004), reflects the impact that reading *Palante* had on the artist in his youth and his early encounters with Taller Boricua. Reproducing signs from Puerto Rico's indigenous Taíno peoples alongside fragmented copies of Abramson's Young Lords portraits, Sanchez's collage represents the Young Lords as part of the ongoing history of Puerto Rican freedom fighters. The inverted palm tree in the middle of the collage represents the inverted logics that maintain the island's political status hanging in the balance. Describing his works as "Ricanstructions" (a term he borrowed from musician Ray Baretto), Sanchez explains that "we as a people must deconstruct the colonized history that is oppressing us and reconstruct the false 'reality' to give testimony to our real history and truth. . . . We must Rican/struct our path toward self determination and freedom."[11]

Shepard Fairey also combed through *Palante* to create *Visual Disobedience* (2004), a screen print that quotes *Liberate Puerto Rico Now!* (1971), a Young Lords poster of a silhouetted figure with a raised arm and shotgun by his or her side. Fairey reproduces the silhouette but adds flowers shooting out from the gun's barrel and the figure's raised hand holds a portrait of Andre the Giant, a deceased wrestling superstar who often appears in Fairey's imagery. On the figure's left is a compass decorated with Art Nuevo patterns and a cryptic, poetic message reads "Visual Disobedience Obey." Accused of plagiarism by some scholars and artists for stripping his radical visual sources of meaning and sued by commercial entities like World Wide Wrestling Entertainment for

violating their trademark name "Andre the Giant," Fairey's borrowings have nonetheless brought worldwide attention to the treasure trove of outstanding graphic design elements that distinguishes the Young Lords visual culture.

Yasmin Hernandez's *Carpeta: Ritchie Perez* (2007) is part of a larger series of paintings of Puerto Ricans who have been targeted as "subversives" and investigated by the police and FBI. Hernandez's sensitively drawn portrait of Perez is surrounded by statements quoted from NYPD memos that report on his "troublesome" activities while active in the YLP. In her artist statement about her work, Hernadez writes: "Although my personal interactions with Richie Perez were limited, I know beautiful stories of him through his dear friend, my mentor, and beloved Young Lord Vicente 'Panama' Alba. Through Panama's loving memories I know of Richie as a devout teacher, activist, and friend, ever-committed to bringing justice to marginalized communities, particularly families torn apart by police brutality."[12]

Joe Conzo's photographs highlight Ritchie Perez's central role in organizing the Committee Against Fort Apache (CAFA). Between 1979 and 1981, CAFA waged a campaign to shelve the movie *Fort Apache: The South Bronx (1981)* due to its pejorative depictions of South Bronx residents as drug addicts and criminals. "CAFA recognized that it was fighting not only the giant media conglomerates which financed, produced and distributed *Fort Apache*, but also growing right-wing sentiment in America," writes Perez. "Recognizing this reality, our goals were primarily educational and organizational: to educate our community about the effects of media stereotyping and show its links to the overall situation we face—the deterioration of our living conditions, the destruction of survival programs like bilingual education, the rise of racism and repression—and to challenge with our presence and strength the movie's racist messages that we are inferior peoples, incapable of organizing ourselves for change."[13]

Caecilia Tripp's haunting 2014 film *Music for (prepared) Bicycles (after John Cage and Marcel Duchamp)* celebrates the one-hundredth birthday of composer John Cage. This project divided Cage's score "prepared piano" into three sonic bicycle processions, capturing the "music of change" thriving in the streets in three global cities: Bombay, New York, and Cape Town. To create her score, and film, Tripp made a sonic bicycle, a moving instrument, spiked with electric guitar strings that trilled through sites of social struggles within each metropolis. Score Two, on view at the Bronx Museum, was created in collaboration with the Schwinn Bike Club, a Puerto Rican bicycle club in Bushwick, Brooklyn. The sonic bicycle procession rode through Brooklyn, East Harlem, and the Bronx by passing sites of Young Lords demonstrations and takeovers throughout New York barrios.

Spanning different generations, nationalities, and ethnicities, the artists displayed in *¡Presente!* represent a small percentage of a global arts community that is connected to the Young Lords by what we might think of as a purple thread of passion for art in the service of social justice and vanguard aesthetics. Their works show us that the Young Lords' way leads down a path where art and politics intersect; activists, artists, and the people intermingle; culture is recovered and reconstituted; and Pedro Pietri's manifestoes are committed to memory:

> To be free means to be proud of yourself!
> To be proud of yourself means to be creative!
> To defend your dreams means to have courage!
> To make your dreams come true in your lifetime!
> And once your dreams come true, you will never
> Have to worry about dying as long as you live![14]

Installation image featuring works by Taller Boricua
Presente! The Young Lords in New York
The Bronx Museum of the Arts, 2015
Courtesy Peter Gregoire

Notes

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1. Iris Morales, "Power to the People," in *Palante: Voices and Photographs of the Young Lords, 1969–1971* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2011), 5.

2. T. V. Reed, "Reflections," in *The Art of Protest: Culture and Activism from the Civil Right Movement to the Streets of Seattle* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 297.

3. Pablo "Yoruba" Guzmán, "Before People Called Me a Spic, They Called Me a Nigger," in *Palante*, 77.

4. Frances Negrón-Muntaner, "The Look of Sovereignty: Politics and Style in the Young Lords," *Centro Journal* 27, no. 1 (2015).

5. Young Lords, "Young Lords Party 13 Point Program and Platform," in *Palante*, 144.

6. The New York branch of the Young Lords Party was founded by members of a pro-independence study group in East Harlem known as La Sociedad Albizu Campos. The prevalence of Albizu Campos in Young Lords offices and paraphernalia reflects the group's origins.

7. Nitza Tufiño, in an interview with the author, March 23, 2015.

8. Marcos Dimas, in an interview with the author, March 23, 2015.

9. Lucy Lippard, "The Art Workers Coalition: Not a History," in *Get the Message? A Decade of Art for Social Change* (New York: E. P. Dutton, Inc. 1984), 12.

10. Miguel Luciano, artist statement sent to the author, May 2015.

11. Juan Sánchez, artist statement, in *Collection Remixed* (New York: Bronx Museum, 2005), 76.

12. Yasmin Hernandez, artist statement sent to the author, June 2015.

13. Ritchie Perez, "Committee Against Fort Apache," document found in Loudres Torres Papers, box 8, folder 7, Archives of El Centro de Estudios Puertorriquenos, Hunter College.

14. Pedro Pietri, excerpt from "El Puerto Rican Embassy MANIFESTO" (1994), reproduced in *El Passport* (1994) and designed by Adal.

Caecilia Tripp
Still from "Music for (prepared) Bicycles," Score Two New York, Brooklyn/Spanish Harlem/ The Bronx, 2013
HD video, 14 minutes
Courtesy of the artist

Miguel Luciano
Machetero Air Force One's (Filiberto Ojeda Uptowns), 2007
Vinyl and acrylic on sneakers
11 x 4 x 4 ½ inches
Courtesy of the artist

Juan Sanchez
Once We Were Warriors, 2000
Lithography, photo lithography, paper pulp, stenciling,
Chine-collé, and hand coloring
34 ½ x 60 inches
Courtesy of the artist

Shepard Fairey
Visual Disobedience, 2004
Screenprint on paper
Edition 8/300
18 x 24 inches
Courtesy of Shepard Fairey/OBEY Giant Art