Revolutionary Poster Women:
Socialist Realism, Pop Art, and Model Femininity in Cuban Political Graphics, 1961–75

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April 2020

A thesis submitted to McGill University in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of Master of Arts in Art History

Abstract

In the decades after the Cuban Revolution of 1959, state-commissioned posters articulated and shaped official models of socialist feminine citizenship. Drawing on graphic propaganda practices of the Eastern Bloc, Cuban posters of the early 1960s mobilized the aesthetics of Socialist Realism to frame women's path to liberation within the revolutionary paradigm. Revolutionary leaders' critiques of cultural dogmatism allowed Cuban artists to openly engage with transnational avant-garde visual languages such as Pop art, bringing these aesthetics to political posters' image of women. In this analysis of representations of women in Cuban political posters from 1961 to 1975, I examine these Socialist Realist and Pop-inspired images for their gendered messages and values. I observe that formal changes in depictions of women did not correspond to rhetorical change: avant-garde posters continued to articulate gender struggle in the state's terms, namely as solvable through women's incorporation in the extra-domestic workforce. Drawing on representative cases, I argue that the gender messaging of Cuban revolutionary posters was not contingent on visual language. Pop acted as a vehicle for transmitting official models of femininity in Cuba just as Socialist Realism had in the Soviet Union, China, and elsewhere. In presenting these findings as well as previously unpublished graphic materials, this thesis contributes to the recent scholarship on vernacular, political uses of Pop outside of the Cold War's West.

Résumé

Dans les décennies qui suivent la Révolution cubaine de 1959, les affiches commandées par l'état articulent et façonnent les modèles officiels de la citoyenne socialiste. Empruntant aux pratiques graphiques qui sont utilisées dans le Bloc de l'Est, les affiches cubaines du début des années 1960 font appel à l'esthétique du réalisme socialiste pour définir la libération des femmes à l'intérieur du paradigme révolutionnaire. Les critiques sur le dogmatisme culturel, qui sont émises par les leaders révolutionnaires, permettent aussi aux artistes de s'inspirer ouvertement des courants visuels qui sont présents dans les milieux d'avant-garde transnationaux, dont le Pop art, ce qui leur permet d'intégrer ce langage esthétique à l'image de la femme dans les affiches politiques. Dans cette analyse des représentations des femmes dans les posters politiques cubains entre 1961 et 1975, nous étudierons ces images qui s'inspirent du réalisme socialisme et du Pop art afin de décortiquer la façon dont elles articulent le discours et les valeurs de genre. Ainsi, nous verrons que des changement formels qui surviennent dans la représentation des femmes ne correspondent pas à des changements rhétoriques : les affiches d'avant-garde continuent à décrire la lutte pour l'égalité des sexes en fonction du discours officiel de l'État, discours qui veut que l'intégration des femmes dans la main-d'oeuvre extra-domestique résolve la situation. En nous appuyant sur des cas représentatifs, nous défendrons l'idée que le message des affiches révolutionnaires, en ce qui concerne le genre, ne dépend pas d'un langage visuel. Le Pop art a été un moyen pour transmettre les modèles officiels de féminité à Cuba, tout comme le réalisme socialiste l'a été en Union soviétique, en Chine et ailleurs. En présentant ces résultats de recherche ainsi que des documents graphiques inédits, cette thèse est une contribution aux plus récentes recherches sur les utilisations politiques vernaculaire du Pop art en dehors de l'Ouest durant la guerre froide.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my supervisor Prof. Camila Maroja for her generous mentorship and perceptive feedback. She tirelessly offered clarity when I became muddled in my writing, and helped me develop my ideas through the many iterations of this text. Prof. Maroja's expertise, patience, and timely advice made this work possible.

To Prof. Betsy Boone, Dr. Stephen Cruikshank, and the Undergraduate Research Initiative staff at the University of Alberta, thank you for nurturing my curiosity and supporting the archival research project that launched this thesis.

My gratitude to the librarians and archivists at the Biblioteca Nacional José Martí in Havana, and to Mr. Lincoln Cushing, who generously shared their resources and provided me with digital reproductions of the posters at the centre of this study.

Many thanks to Marjolaine Poirier for her French translation and to the friends and colleagues at McGill University who took the time to read and comment on my work in development, act as sounding boards, and occasionally commiserate.

To my tía abuela Cuca and her colleague Daisy, trailblazing *federadas* whose memories and first hand accounts nourished this project with a human perspective: *muchísimas gracias por su apoyo y confianza*. I hope to do right by you.

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Abbreviations & Acronyms

BNJM	*Biblioteca Nacional José Martí* (Cuban National Library)
CDR	*Comités de Defensa de la Revolución* (Committees for the Defence of the Revolution)
CNC	*Consejo Nacional de Cultura* (National Council for Culture)
COR	*Comisión de Orientación Revolucionaria* (Commission for Revolutionary Orientation)
CTC	*Central de Trabajadores Cubanos* (Workers' Central Union of Cuba)
DOR	*Departamento de Orientación Revolucionaria* (Department of Revolutionary Orientation)
FMC	*Federación de Mujeres Cubanas* (Federation of Cuban Women)
ICAIC	*Instituto Cubano del Arte e Industria Cinematográficos* (Cuban National Film Board)
OSPAAAL	*Organización de Solidaridad con los Pueblos de Asia, África y América Latina* (Organization of Solidarity of the Peoples of Africa, Asia, and Latin America)
PCC	*Partido Comunista de Cuba* (Cuban Communist Party)
UNEAC	*Unión de Escritores e Artistas Cubanos* (Union of Cuban Writers and Artists)

Original Spanish texts have been included in the body or footnotes whenever possible. All translations from Spanish are mine unless otherwise indicated.

Image List

1. Alberto Korda. *Campesina* [Countrywoman](c. 1960). Gelatin silver print; dimensions variable.
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I. Introduction

The triumph of the Cuban Revolution in 1959, and Fidel Castro's declaration of its socialist orientation in 1961, had resounding implications for political movements in the Americas and beyond. At home, the Revolution's social reform program raised questions about the role of women in the new socialist Cuba. These changes presented an opportunity to rewrite gendered social scripts embedded in the patriarchal capitalist paradigms of the Cuban Republic, and have drawn the attention of journalists, political activists, and academics. Since the early 1970s, social scientists and humanities scholars on and off the island have examined the impact of the Revolution on Cuban women. These studies have lauded women's progress in the realms of healthcare, education, employment, and political representation under the national women's mass organization, the *Federación de Mujeres Cubanas* (Federation of Cuban Women, hereafter FMC) since 1960. They have also incisively identified limitations in Cuba's state-led approach to women's liberation and ongoing challenges and barriers to gender equality. Spanning six decades and far from exhausted, these debates continue to dispute the role of the Revolution in Cuban women's ongoing struggle for gender justice.

Visual depictions of women reveal biases that written language obscures. Take for instance Alberto Korda's photograph of a *campesina* (countrywoman, c. 1960, fig. 1). Korda fashioned himself as the documentarist of the Revolution by producing ostensibly candid pro-revolutionary images of life in post-1959 Cuba. His work, which deploys techniques of documentary photography, came to shape revolutionary visual culture of the 1960s and 70s. The portrait shows a smiling, young, attractive Afro-Cuban woman wearing a collared shirt, plaits, and a straw hat. She stands in front of a massive mural of Castro's profile on the façade of the Ministry of the Interior building in Havana's *Plaza de la Revolución* (Revolution Square). Presented as a visual document, this image both defines an ideal revolutionary rural feminine subject and authenticates her existence. Through the label of *campesina*, this anonymous portrait claims to represent the rural feminine subject writ large. The photograph tacitly encodes specific characteristics such as age, physical beauty, race, and pro-revolutionary political orientation within Cuban rural feminine identity. In this way, the image not only defines

c*ampesinas* in terms of agrarian labour and gender, but also materializes racial and political subtexts not discernible from the word alone. Images like this one were crucial to Cuba's reinvention as a socialist state. Despite their discursive richness and the established affinity between visual culture and politics in revolutionary Cuba, the existing scholarship on women and the Revolution largely overlooks official visual representations of women.

A. Project Overview

1. Objects of Study

This thesis examines graphic propaganda in revolutionary Cuba to elucidate how state-commissioned public images of women articulated gender. In particular, I consider political posters that depict, reference, or address women and were produced and publicly circulated in Cuba by state organizations between 1961 and 1976. The term "posters" refers to large prints produced in editions of multiples using mechanical or semi-mechanical techniques such as silkscreen or offset printing, and intended for public display. These posters combine images with written text to convey political messages in an eye-catching manner. I specifically choose to study state-commissioned posters because as deliberate, mass-produced public images, they evidence the state's investment in shaping popular notions of womanhood. These images, like Korda's photograph examined above, make persuasive claims about Cuban women, their desires and motivations, and their economic and social possibilities and constraints. Because my goal is to examine national models of womanhood, I focus on posters intended for domestic rather than foreign audiences. With the exception of Raúl Martínez's poster for the film *Lucía* (1968), which I include to map its formal influence on subsequent political images of women, this study concentrates on political posters, which are more closely aligned with official gender views.[1]

The bulk of my objects of study are held at the *Biblioteca Nacional José Martí* (José Martí National Library, BNJM) in Havana, whose digital archive of revolutionary posters I consulted in March of 2018. The BNJM's poster collection counts over 15,000 items and includes posters published in

[1] While these two categories (i.e., political and cultural posters) are permeable, the production of political posters was subject to greater state oversight and thus more closely aligned with official values and stances. I discuss this distinction in greater detail in the second chapter.

Cuba since the implementation of the national legal deposit decree in 1964, with most items dating from between 1963 and 1989.[2] Of the roughly 8,000 unique poster designs consulted, I identified over 250 that depicted or addressed women. My present cases are drawn from this group.[3]

There are some challenges inherent to studying propaganda posters which were originally conceived as ephemeral visual communication objects.[4] Anonymized production and inconsistent record-keeping practices make it difficult to ascertain authorship, exact publication date, production technique, and dates and sites of display. Moreover, the persuasive function of the objects poses challenges for discerning publisher directives from designers' creative decisions and speculating site-specific meanings and associations. Determining whether certain choices were agency-mandated, the result of material scarcity, or artist-led thus remains fraught with uncertainty.[5]

2. Periodization and Temporal Scope

While there is no firm consensus among Cubanists as to the precise periodization of the Revolution, I adopt the well-established view that the Cuban Revolution spanned roughly from the assault on the Moncada barracks in 1953 to the approval of the new Constitution in 1976.[6] The present study emphasizes the second half of this period. I delimit my analysis to works produced between 1961 and 1976, following the declaration of the socialist character of the Revolution in 1961. This decade

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[2] Laura Susan Ward, "A Revolution in Preservation: Digitizing Political Posters at the National Library of Cuba," *IFLA Journal* 31, no. 3 (October 2005): 260.

[3] These materials' fragile condition and the BNJM's under-resourced archival facilities necessitate that librarians exercise strict control over access to the poster collection. It is standard practice to direct researchers to the BNJM's digital poster archive – which holds over 8,000 digital reproductions – in an effort to curb damage to the original documents. Ward, 263–65.

[4] BNJM director Eliades Acosta recognizes that there is information that only an original document can provide, such as marginal notations and characteristics of the substrate and ink under different light conditions. Ward, 266. Being conscious of the limitations of analysing digital reproductions, I have striven to consult the original posters whenever possible.

[5] Whenever possible, I consulted published interviews with Cuban poster designers, which I cite throughout this work, for evidence of personal creative liberty and descriptions of censorship practices. See: Shifra M. Goldman, "Painters into Poster Makers" in *Dimensions of the Americas: Art and Social Change in Latin America and the United States* (Chicago : University of Chicago Press, 1994); Antonio García-Rayo, *El cartel de cine cubano: 1961-2004 / The Cuban Film Poster : 1961-2004* (Madrid: El Gran Caid, 2004).

[6] For an illustrative discussion of periodization of the Cuban Revolution by six Cubanists from various disciplines, see: Yvon Grenier et al., "¿Cuándo Terminó La Revolución Cubana?: Una Discusión," *Cuban Studies* 47, no. 1 (March 14, 2019): 143–65, https://doi.org/10.1353/cub.2019.0008.

and a half, which I term *revolutionary socialist Cuba*, also brought together a national resocialization of gender and the height of Cuban poster design.[7]

In the political realm, these years witnessed the consolidation of power from triumphant revolutionary movement in January of 1959 to single-party socialist state by the mid-1970s. As part of this process, the revolutionary government strove to create a new political culture which emerged through the interactions of Cuban people and state policies and programs.[8] The emancipation of women through their incorporation into public life was a key part of this program.[9] New national institutions such as the *Consejo Nacional de Cultura* (National Council for Culture, CNC) active from 1961 to 1976, and the *Partido Comunista de Cuba* (Cuban Communist Party, PCC), founded in 1965, served to guide and enact policy. The 1960s and first half of the 1970s marked a period of institutionalization of the Revolution as these organizations and their policies took form.[10]

I take the ratification of the Socialist Constitution by popular referendum on February 15, 1976 as the end of this period of consolidation and institutionalization. By designating the PCC as the driving force in society, the new public-approved constitution demonstrated the government's success in consolidating power by reforming national political culture. Among the legal amendments enacted in the new Socialist Constitution was the Family Code, which legally established equal responsibility for childcare and domestic work among men and women.[11] However unenforceable, this law entrenched the principle of gender-blind responsibility for domestic and care work in constitutional law.[12] The Family Code of 1976 thus nominally ended the social paradigm of

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[7] By *national resocialization of gender*, I mean a process whereby the state attempts to reshape shared social values, norms, and beliefs about women at a national scale through education and training programs, policies to incentivize women's social and workforce participation, among other strategies.

[8] Aviva Chomsky, *A History of the Cuban Revolution* (Chichester, West Sussex, U.K. ; Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 88.

[9] Concern with women's emancipation in Cuba coincided with international political movements that shaped thinking about women throughout the 1960s and 70s. The Women's Liberation Movement brought unprecedented international attention to issues of sexism and patriarchy. Women's liberationists contributed to feminist scholarship by developing intellectual and analytical frames to make sense of the systemic oppression of women. One of these emergent approaches was materialist feminism, an analytical stance which sees gender as socially constructed through material power relations. The origins of materialist feminism are widely credited to French sociologist Christine Delphy and U.S. literary scholar Rosemary Hennessy. Bronwyn Winter, "Feminism, Materialist," in *The Wiley Blackwell Encyclopedia of Gender and Sexuality Studies* (Wiley, 2016), 1–3.

[10] Chomsky, *A History of the Cuban Revolution*, 107.

[11] Guillermo Rodríguez Gutiérrez, *Ley no. 1289: Código de familia*, Textos Legales (La Habana: Ediciones ONBC, 2015).

[12] Specifically, articles 24 and 26 of the Family Code (Law No. 1289) postulate equality of rights and duties within marriage, and equal obligation to care for the family, upbringing and education of children according to principles of socialist morality, and cooperative management of the home, respectively. Rodríguez Gutiérrez, 9.

feminized domestic labour, signifying a shift in national feminine gender roles at the level of official rhetoric.

In the realm of culture, the period of 1961 to 1976 saw vibrant public debates on the roles of culture and the artist-intellectual in the new Cuba. Artists, intellectuals, cultural workers, and state officials balanced competing concerns for creative liberty, aesthetic innovation, and the future of the Revolution. As I will discuss in the second chapter, this period comprises two phases in Cuban cultural policy under the CNC, marked by creative freedom from 1961 to 1969, and heightened state control from 1969 to 1976. Most significantly, the 1960s and early 1970s coincide with what art historians have conventionally called "the golden age of posters" in Cuba.[13] Poster production flourished under the auspices of state-funded organizations such as the *Instituto Cubano del Arte e Industria Cinematográficos* (Cuban National Film Board, ICAIC, f. 1959), the *Comisión de Orientación Revolucionaria* (Commission for Revolutionary Orientation, COR, f. 1962), and the *Organización de Solidaridad con los Pueblos de Asia, África y América Latina* (Organization of Solidarity of the Peoples of Africa, Asia, and Latin America, OSPAAAL, f. 1966). Meanwhile, artists working across a range of geopolitical contexts developed and propagated a visual language – now historicized as Pop Art – that combined mass production methods and appropriated forms and elements of popular media to deliver impactful, often politically-charged messages. Responding to domestic demands and international cultural developments, Cuban designers adopted and localized avant-garde visual languages such as Pop Art to articulate a distinctively Cuban socialist ethos. Their work began to garner international recognition by the mid 1960s.[14] By the early 1970s, foreign publications such as Dugald Stermer's *The Art of Revolution* (1970) and exhibitions such as the Stedelijk Museum's *Cubaanse Affiches* (1971) propagated reproductions of Cuban revolutionary posters internationally.[15]

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[13] For uses and discussions of this expression, see: Sara Vega Miche, "Los mejores carteles de nuestras vidas," in *El cartel de cine cubano: 1961-2004 / The Cuban Film Poster : 1961-2004*, ed. Antonio García-Rayo (Madrid: El Gran Caid, 2004), 68; David Craven, "The Visual Arts since the Cuban Revolution," *Third Text* 6, no. 20 (September 1, 1992): 80; Pepe Menéndez, "Apuntes para una cronología del diseño gráfico en Cuba (de 1950 a La Actualidad)," *Cuba Gráfica. Una visión del diseño gráfico cubano.* Casa de las Américas, 2007. Accessed November 5, 2016. http://www.casadelasamericas.com/artesplasticas/eventos/2007/cubagr.

[14] For instance, graphic designers Esteban Ayala Ferrer and Antonio Fernández Reboiro were awarded poster design prizes in the German Democratic Republic in 1964 and in Sri Lanka in 1965, respectively. Menéndez, "Apuntes para una cronología del diseño gráfico en Cuba (de 1950 a La Actualidad)."

[15] See Dugald Stermer, *The Art of Revolution* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1970); Ad Petersen, *Cubaanse Affiches: Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, 7 Mei tot en met 6 Juni 1971*, ed. Ada Stroeve (Amsterdam: Stedelijk Museum, 1971).

These factors, coupled with acclaim at home, promoted poster production in Cuba throughout the mid-1960s and 70s. By the end of the decade, decreasing reliance on posters as communication media, among other factors, led to a decline in state-commissioned poster production.[16] The confluence of a golden age of revolutionary graphics and the national resocialization of gender make the period of 1961 to 1976 crucial for questions of women's public representation in political posters.

B. Review of the Literature

Two bodies of scholarship inform my contextual and formal analyses of revolutionary posters of women: studies of women in the Cuban Revolution, and discussions of Socialist Realism and Pop Art's international circulation. In the first section that follows, *Women and the Cuban Revolution*, I survey the literature on the status of women in Cuba during my period of study and situate my work as responding to gaps in the existing scholarship by analyzing women's official visual representation as an extension of Cuban gender policy. The second section, *Socialist Realism and Pop Art*, briefly outlines key characteristics of these two visual languages that inform my analysis of the posters in the third chapter.

1. Women and the Cuban Revolution

In my interdisciplinary research on the literature on women in Cuba, I observed two major narrative trends.[17] The first compares women's status before and after the triumph of the Revolution in 1959; and the second, balances accounts of women's achievements with those of ongoing barriers to equality. These narratives are not mutually exclusive. For example, political scientist Nicola Murray describes women's conditions before the Revolution of 1959 in order to contextualize her analysis of post-1959 achievements and ongoing challenges.[18] Other studies, such as sociologist Marlene

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[16] For instance, the return of colour television in 1975 shifted the landscape for state mass communication in Cuba, and likely contributed to this decline. Roberto Diaz-Martin, "Chapter 19: The Recent History of Satellite Communications in Cuba," in *Beyond The Ionosphere: Fifty Years of Satellite Communication*, ed. Andrew J. Butrica, The NASA History Series (Washington, D.C.: National Aeronautics and Space Administration, 1997), 252–54.

[17] My research on women in revolutionary Cuba draws on English and Spanish-language scholarly publications spanning from 1973 to 2016. The scholars whose work I cite align themselves with the disciplines of history, political science, sociology, anthropology, and literature, among others.

[18] Nicola Murray, "Socialism and Feminism: Women and the Cuban Revolution, Part I," *Feminist Review*, no. 2 (1979): 57–73.

Duprey's analysis of women's publications, connect pre-1959 women's conditions and attitudes with ongoing issues.[19] Regardless of their stance on women's progress in Cuba, most scholars acknowledge Cuban women's progress in terms of quantitative indicators of increased access to education, healthcare, and paid labour.[20]

While quantitative indicators do show remarkable improvement in Cuban women's quality of life, feminist scholars dispute the extent to which this progress was a state priority and suggest that reforms fell short of meaningfully changing pre-revolutionary gender roles. As early as 1973, political scientist Susan Kaufman Purcell evaluated how gender policy in post-1959 Cuba responded to the state's broader modernization and social reform programs.[21] She argued that Cuba's state-led approach to gender equality meant that the rate, scope, and extent of changes were regulated by the state.[22] This top-down structure made the pursuit of women's emancipation contingent on the values and priorities of the overwhelmingly male political leadership. The state prioritized those aspects of women's advancement that were harmonious with its primary goal of economic modernization, such as women's incorporation in the extra-domestic workforce.[23] Writing in 1988, political scientist G. Lane Van Tassell underscored this view. He drew on public statements and documents from the first months after the Revolution to affirm that "women's rights per se were not high on the agenda for the leaders of the Cuban Revolution."[24] I use Kaufman Purcell and Van Tassell's evaluation of gender policy in relation to state priorities in order to trace the economic and social conditions in which women's roles developed in Cuba.

Building on the work of Kaufman Purcell and Van Tassell, subsequent studies identify two factors as barriers to the achievement of gender equality: first, the state's understanding of gender inequality

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[19] Marlene Duprey, "De patrias y muertes ya vencidas. Las mujeres y la revolución de los cubanos," *Memoria y Sociedad* 12, no. 24 (January 2008): 67–76.

[20] For recent representative examples, see Salim Lamrani, "Women in Cuba: The Emancipatory Revolution," trans. Larry R. Oberg, *International Journal of Cuban Studies* 8, no. 1 (2016): 109; Elena Díaz González, "Cuban Women: Achievements And Challenges For Social Participation," *International Journal of Cuban Studies* 2, no. 1/2 (2010): 138–46.

[21] Susan Kaufman Purcell, "Modernizing Women for a Modern Society: The Cuban Case," in *Female and Male in Latin America; Essays.*, ed. Ann M. Pescatello (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1973), 257–71.

[22] This is in contrast to being regulated by women or women's independent organizations. Kaufman Purcell, 259.

[23] For example, when state goals and women's advancement competed for limited economic and political resources – such as in the case of the socialization of childcare – investment in women's equality suffered. Kaufman Purcell, 258.

[24] G. Lane Van Tassell, "Women, Politics and Contemporary Cuba: A Research Note," *Southeastern Political Review* 16, no. 2 (September 1, 1988): 210.

as resulting from economic inequality, and second, the absence of a local independent women's movement.[25] Theoretician L. Susan Brown argues that the economic view of gender inequality led the state to de-emphasize entrenched ideological barriers to gender justice: *machismo*, biological essentialism, and gender roles that held women responsible for unpaid domestic and care work.[26] State rhetoric did not problematize conventional gender roles, but continued to assign women primary responsibility for domestic and care work, which were not officially recognized as socially productive until the mid-1960s.[27] By this time, it had become evident that women's traditional domestic and child-rearing roles were hindering their participation in extra-domestic labour.[28] State programs implemented to alleviate this burden (e.g., maternity leave, paid family days, socialized childcare, shopping queue priority, etc.) did not challenge traditional gender roles, but rather sought to facilitate women's capacity to carry out conventional gendered work while also working outside the home. Neither did the state combat prejudice against female leadership or stereotypes about what occupations were suitable for women. Childcare centres intended to facilitate women's workforce participation were overwhelmingly staffed by women. In this sense, the state reinscribed and naturalized conventional gender roles. This gender rhetoric is rendered visual in political posters through tropes of women as mothers and caretakers working only within gender-segregated spaces.

Traditional gender roles mediated official efforts to mobilize women as labourers. Gender historian Muriel Nazzari notes that despite these efforts, Cuban economic policy continued to prioritize male employment above that of women.[29] The constitutional principle of guaranteed employment was not applied equally across genders. In practice, all men, but only women who were heads of households,

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[25] Examining the first barrier, L. Susan Brown argues that the Cuban state understood gender inequality as an extension of economic inequality. In practice, this view of gender-based oppression as economic equated women's liberation with their participation in extra-domestic labour. Political scientist Nicola Murray notes the limitations of this view, stating that "for many formerly poverty-stricken women who had had to work from sheer economic necessity, 'liberation' meant release from outside work, taking care of their own homes, and having time to spend with their children." See: L. Susan Brown, "Women in Post-Revolutionary Cuba: A Feminist Critique," *Insurgent Sociologist* 13, no. 4 (July 1, 1986): 45–49; Nicola Murray, "Socialism and Feminism: Women and the Cuban Revolution, Part Two," *Feminist Review*, no. 3 (1979): 100, https://doi.org/10.2307/1394713.

[26] Biological essentialism, or gender essentialism, is a theory that attributes innate biological and psychological qualities to people on the basis of gender. For example, a gender-essentialist view may claim that men are inherently physically stronger, or that women are naturally better caregivers.

[27] Brown, "Women in Post-Revolutionary Cuba," 46.

[28] Johanna I. Moya Fábregas, "The Cuban Woman's Revolutionary Experience: Patriarchal Culture and the State's Gender Ideology, 1950–1976," *Journal of Women's History* 22, no. 1 (2010): 67.

[29] Muriel Nazzari, "The 'Woman Question' in Cuba: An Analysis of Material Constraints on Its Solution," *Signs* 9, no. 2 (1983): 260–61.

were legally guaranteed employment. This difference was exacerbated in periods of low employment, in which limited positions and male-preferential hiring practices effectively situated women as a national labour reserve. In brief, even within an economic view of gender inequality, the state's efforts to incorporate women in the workforce were mediated by conventional, pre-revolutionary gender roles. Commitment to women's emancipation-through-labour was uneven and contingent on its service to national economic interests.

The state's economic view of gender inequality was compounded by the absence of independent women's organizations through which women could politically self-organize. The existing literature largely sees the FMC, the national women's organization, as a top-down mediator between women and the state.[30] Murray argues that the top-down mediation, along with the absence of grassroots women's organizations, impeded women's awareness and articulation of their own oppression.[31] Sociologist Marifeli Pérez-Stable similarly emphasizes the need for women's organizations to develop consciousness-raising efforts independent from revolutionary reform programs.[32] Pérez-Stable uses the term *conciencia* (political consciousness) to describe "the social and individual (male and female) awareness of the material and cultural exigencies required to mitigate inequalities between the sexes, at home and in society."[33] I use Pérez-Stable's notion of *conciencia* to examine the political perspectives amplified in official posters of women. As I discuss in the next chapter, this top-down structure is reproduced in official graphics production. Consequently, not only are Cuban women not setting the agenda for national gender policy, they are also not proportionately involved in crafting the image of women in political posters.

This later point is underscored by the more recent subfield within the scholarship on women in revolutionary Cuba that examines women's representation and creative production. These studies evaluate the presence of women as both subjects and creators of works of literature, film, popular music, and graphic art. Literary scholar Barbara Riess critiques the reliance on linear, quantitative, statistical approaches of earlier studies of women in Cuba. She proposes a "cultural analysis

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[30] I examine the limitations imposed on women's activism in my discussion of the FMC and its role in fashioning the image of Cuban women in chapter two. Murray, "Socialism and Feminism, Part II," 100; Bengelsdorf, "On the Problem of Studying Women in Cuba," 36.
[31] Murray, "Socialism and Feminism, Part II," 104.
[32] Marifeli Pérez-Stable, "Cuban Women and the Struggle for 'Conciencia,'" *Cuban Studies* 17 (January 1, 1987): 52.
[33] Pérez-Stable, 67.

approach" that considers women's contributions to the making of revolutionary culture alongside quantitative achievements.[34] Riess discerns two waves of scholarship on women in Cuba. She characterizes the first wave as "counting women," where studies construe women as a fixed sex-determined category. In contrast to this approach, the second wave gives "an account of gender" or articulates the social construction of gender roles.[35] Riess' work informs my study of images of women in Cuban political posters from 1961 to 1976 by engaging visual representations as avenues for constructing gender roles. I use Riess' framework to ask, for instance, how do images of working women in International Women's Day posters construct ideal womanhood as economically productive?

Cultural historians Duprey and Johanna I. Moya Fábregas compare pre-revolutionary Cuban women's magazines and the FMC's magazine *Mujeres* (1961–present), noting narrative similarities that legitimized women's political engagement through gender-essentialist tropes.[36] *Mujeres* contained women's political activism to existing state institutions and within the traditionally feminine realms of motherhood, domestic economics, and anti-war advocacy on the basis of their role as mothers.[37] Moya Fábregas argues that FMC's magazine *Mujeres* was a key vehicle through which the state maintained this rhetorical continuity.[38] Given that the FMC produced *Mujeres* and commissioned posters of women simultaneously, these comparative studies provide a model for situating Cuban revolutionary posters within a larger transmedia tradition of public images of women that preceded the Revolution.

2. Women in Revolutionary Posters

In my literature survey, I located only two scholarly examinations of the image of Cuban women in revolutionary posters. The first is Cuban historian Reinaldo Morales Campos's 2010 "*La mujer en el*

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[34] Barbara Riess, "Counting Women, Women Who Count: Measures of the Revolution within the Revolution," *Cuban Studies* 42 (2011): 115–35.
[35] Riess, 123–24.
[36] Duprey, "De patrias y muertes ya vencidas," 67–76; Moya Fábregas, "The Cuban Woman's Revolutionary Experience," 61–84.
[37] Duprey argues that after the Revolution in 1959 the FMC maintained this rationale for women's political participation and adapted it to the goals of the new government. Duprey, "De patrias y muertes ya vencidas," 69, 73-74.
[38] Moya Fábregas explains that while the state's perpetuation of patriarchal ideas about womanhood helped maintain social cohesion in the 1960s and 70s, these values posed a barrier to women's liberation by upholding unequal power relations between men and women. Moya Fábregas, "The Cuban Woman's Revolutionary Experience," 73–74.

cartel de la revolución cubana" (Woman in the Poster of the Cuban Revolution).[39] This brief essay argues that posters have played an important role in illustrating women's struggle for equality and women's participation in building a socialist society. Morales Campos develops this argument by describing a selection of Cuban posters produced between 1962 to 2004 alongside information about women's history in revolutionary Cuba. Morales Campos structures his monograph in two sections corresponding to pre- and post-1959 Cuba. The second section contextualizes women's mobilization campaigns and provides statistical indicators of women's social participation. Morales Campos does not formally analyze the images, but rather uses them to illustrate women's increased participation in public life. In this sense, the work more closely resembles an illustrated account of the status of women in revolutionary Cuba than an interpretative analysis of feminine iconography in revolutionary posters. In a passage that illustrates this tendency to accept images at face value, the author writes: "Women's new protagonism began to be *reflected* in the Cuban graphic design that emerged from the Revolution, and particularly its posters; which became effective means of communicating the new social transformations."[40] Here the author frames the posters as mirrors of a changing society, as demonstrative rather than constitutive of social reality. Yet images are rarely mere reflections of reality; these posters are discursive and persuasive objects in their own right.[41] These works propose a reality and set of values: they aim to persuade viewers to adopt these views as their own.

While there is informative value in Morales Campos' work as a survey of revolutionary posters that concern women, he underestimates the capacity of visual materials to act on ideology, as well to communicate different messages to different viewers. I take Morales Campos' essay as a primary source of images concerning women in revolutionary Cuba and build on this work by attending to the partisan, persuasive, and multi-layered nature of these images. Rejecting the view of these posters as passive, transparent conduits of information, my contextual analyses attend to how state

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[39] Reinaldo Morales Campos, "La mujer en el cartel de la revolución cubana [Women in the Poster of the Cuban Revolution]," *Género con Clase* (blog), August 2010.

[40] "*El nuevo protagonismo de la mujer comenzó a reflejarse en la gráfica cubana surgida con la Revolución y en particular sus carteles; devenidos en eficaces medios comunicativos de las nuevas transformaciones sociales.*" Morales Campos, Reinaldo. "La mujer en el cartel de la revolución cubana [Women in the Poster of the Cuban Revolution]."

[41] Pollock, "Women, Art and Ideology: Questions for Feminist Art Historians," 41–42.

agencies, graphic designers, and viewers negotiate meaning. Through close visual analyses of the images, I draw out trends and patterns in their rhetoric on gender.

The second work is Nancy Anne Lowery's 1989 Master's thesis in Political Science. In "Female Imagery in the Political Posters of China and Cuba, Using the Soviet Union as a Model," she surveys how these three states depicted women in propaganda posters. My discussion focuses on Lowery's third chapter, which examines six Cuban revolutionary posters.[42] Comparing pre- and post-1959 conditions for women in Cuba, Lowery's thesis follows the comparative narrative pattern of earlier studies. Lowery surveyed over two-hundred Cuban posters of which she identified six that depict women. Four of these posters were commissioned by the FMC for what the author calls "women's issues," which are not further detailed.[43] Based on this scant sample, Lowery claims that the Cuban government did not make a concerted effort to "promote the female image as one that is equal with men."[44] She attributes the limited female representation in Cuban posters to two factors: first, the low number of female graphic designers working on poster production in Cuba at this time, and second, the state's view of gender inequality as economic and "solvable within the current system."[45] The author contends that because the state did not dictate the content of the posters, ostensibly giving individual artists the choice to depict what they viewed as important to the revolution, the absence of active women artists meant women's perspectives were neglected.[46]

Lowery's rationalization presumes that poster designers' creative freedom allowed them to set the content of their commissioned images. We know from designers's firsthand accounts that this was not the case for those producing political posters in revolutionary Cuba.[47] The author also implies that women designers would necessarily produce posters with female subjects and concerns, for which we lack sufficient evidence. Lowery posits that because the state saw women's oppression as

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[42] Nancy Anne Lowery, "Female Imagery in the Political Posters of China and Cuba, Using the Soviet Union as a Model" (Master's Thesis, University of Texas at El Paso, 1989), 92-127. This chapter is divided into five sections, each dedicated to pre-revolutionary Cuban political and cultural history, the Cuban Revolution, revolutionary Cuba, Cuban posters, and women in Cuba. The order of these sections establishes a historical sequence and contextualizes images of women in revolutionary posters.

[43] Lowery, 106.

[44] Lowery, 121.

[45] Lowery, 124-25.

[46] Lowery, 123.

[47] Jorge R. Bermúdez, *La imagen constante: El cartel cubano del Siglo XX* (La Habana: Cuba Literaria, 2001), 143; García-Rayo, *El cartel de cine cubano* , 116–17.

stemming from economic inequality rather than cultural or ideological factors, the government did not see a need to regulate public female imagery.[48] I disagree with this claim. As I will argue in my analysis, the intentional reproduction of images of mothers, militiawomen, and women workers in posters by state-affiliated organizations constituted an important facet of official regulation of public images of women. In my project, I was able to consult a much larger archive of revolutionary posters at the BNJM than Lowery had at her disposal in 1989. This larger sample of posters indicates that a substantial number of revolutionary posters did indeed depict or address women.[49] However, I am not concerned with the number of posters about women but rather with the rhetorical content of these images. Following Riess' cultural analysis approach, my methodology goes beyond "counting [images of] women" and seeks instead to understand how images of women shaped gender through an analysis of their visual content.[50] To this end, I combine close formal and contextual analyses informed by the material conditions in which gender roles developed to examine how official representations of women articulated gender policy in Cuba between 1961 and 1976.

Morales Campos and Lowery lay valuable groundwork in the study of representations of women in Cuban revolutionary posters, yet neither author seriously considers the visual rhetoric of revolutionary posters. This is an important, under-examined aspect of these works given that images are not passive vehicles for meaning but are themselves partisan and persuasive discursive agents. The visual rhetoric of images of women in revolutionary Cuban posters during this crucial period from 1961 to 1976 constitutes a meaningful lacuna in the existing literature. The present study intends to address this lacuna through a materialist feminist analysis that attends not only to the historical contexts of poster production and the reception of images of women, but also to their visual content and rhetoric.

3. Socialist Realism and Pop Art

Beyond questions of context and content, these images of women are also shaped by the aesthetic principles that regulate the composition of these posters. My analysis of revolutionary posters centers two among a handful of aesthetic movements that influenced graphic design in Cuba

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[48] Lowery, 125–26.
[49] Of the roughly 8,000 poster designs I consulted at the BNJM, over 250 depicted or addressed women.
[50] Riess, "Counting Women, Women Who Count: Measures of the Revolution within the Revolution," 131.

between 1961 and 1976: Socialist Realism and Pop Art. I briefly introduce these two currents in order to ground the visual analysis of my case studies, which follows in the third chapter.

Socialist Realism was first developed in the Soviet Union in the 1920s, where it was officially adopted as the state style between 1932 and 1988.[51] With roots in 19th-century Academicism and European Realism, this aesthetic movement favours pictorial naturalism and is formally conservative. Socialist Realism is both related to and distinct from Social Realism. Where the latter seeks to depict the conditions of the working class as a way to critique unequal and exploitative power structure, the former aims to advance the cause of socialism by giving tangible form to socialist values.[52] While the basic traits of this movement had taken shape through the works of its practitioners, by 1934 the First Congress of Writers in Russia stipulated four guidelines to regulate Socialist Realism: works should be proletarian, typical, realistic, and partisan.[53] In other words, artworks should be relevant and understandable to the workers, depict scenes from people's everyday life, be representationally (or pictorially) realistic, and be supportive of the aims of the Communist Party.

Socialist Realism is socialist before it is realist.[54] It differs from other forms of realism in that its mimesis goes beyond formally reproducing what is observable, rather to visualize the essence of things in accordance to the dominant values of socialist authorities.[55] In this sense, Socialist Realism speculatively imagines rather than describes reality. This construction of reality is achieved in part through the notion of the *typical*, an ideologically loaded model or exemplary image. Writing in a report to the USSR Party Congress in 1952, Soviet politician Georgy Malenkov explains:

> the *typical* is not that which is encountered the most often, but that which most persuasively expresses the essence of a given social force. From the Marxist-Leninist stand-point, the

[51] Liu Ding and Carol Yinghua Lu, "From the Issue of Art to the Issue of Position: The Echoes of Socialist Realism, Part I," *E-Flux*, May 2014, 3.
[52] Because Socialist Realism aims to visually advance socialism, the main opposition that underlies this visual language is that between Soviet and non-Soviet world views and aesthetics. For more on the opposition of Soviet and non-Soviet, see: Boris Groys, "A Style and a Half: Socialist Realism between Modernism and Postmodernism," in *Socialist Realism without Shores*, ed. Thomas Lahusen and Evgeny Dobrenko (Duke University Press, 1997), 77.
[53] Ding and Lu, "From the Issue of Art to the Issue of Position: The Echoes of Socialist Realism, Part I," 3.
[54] Ding and Lu, 2.
[55] For more on Socialist Realism mimesis, see: Boris Groys, "The Typology of the Nonexistent," in *From Symbolism to Socialist Realism: A Reader*, ed. Irene Masing-Delic (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2012), 433–39.

> typical does not signify some sort of statistical mean ... [it] is the vital sphere in which is manifested the party spirit of realistic art. The question of the typical is always a political question.[56]

As Malenkov suggests, artists' political consciousness is imbricated in their capacity to correctly understand, synthesize, and visually encode socialist values in a given geopolitical context.

Common descriptions of Socialist Realism as "the depiction of life in its revolutionary development" and "national in form, socialist in content" frame this aesthetic movement as dynamic, speculative, and locally adaptable.[57] Indeed, Socialist Realism took on various forms throughout the socialist world, most notably in Central and Eastern Europe and China.[58] While Socialist Realism's presence in pre-revolutionary Cuba was negligible, its 19th-century European academic roots fundamentally shaped Cuban visual arts. Moreover, characteristics of Social Realism were discernible in the works of generations of Cuban vanguards as early as the late 1920s. For instance, members of the first generation of modern Cuban painters such as Eduardo Abela (1889-1965), Marcelo Pogolotti (1902-1988), and Antonio Gattorno (1904-1980) critiqued Cuba's social conditions through their depictions of working-class and agrarian subjects. In the 1950s, members of abstract collective *Los Once* (1953–55), to which Martínez was affiliated, espoused abstraction's socially transformative potential, while critics such as José Antonio Portuondo (1911–96) called for artists to embrace Social Realism.[59] These debates marked the cultural landscape of pre-revolutionary Cuba and fed into the cultural debates that followed 1959. After the Revolution, growing ties with the Eastern Bloc facilitated the propagation of Socialist Realist aesthetics in Cuban political graphics.[60] It is precisely this foreign influence that makes Socialist Realism relevant to my analysis of representations of women in state-commissioned political posters.

Pop art is widely understood as having first emerged in the 1950s in Britain and the United States. Characterized by its use of bold colours, hard-edged lines, and recognizable images appropriated

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[56] Groys, 436.
[57] Groys, 436.
[58] Ding and Lu, 1–13; Liu Ding and Carol Yinghua Lu, "From the Issue of Art to the Issue of Position: The Echoes of Socialist Realism, Part II," *E-Flux*, June 2014, 15–18.
[59] Portuondo (1911–96) called on members *Los Once* (1953–55) to embrace Social Realism. See: Abigail McEwen, *Revolutionary Horizons: Art and Polemics in 1950s Cuba* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), 85.
[60] Bermúdez, *La imagen constante*, 98–101.

from mass media, this experimental visual language blurs distinctions between fine art and mass-commercial culture.[61] Key exponents of Pop include U. S. artists Andy Warhol, who combined painting and commercial image transfer processes, and Roy Lichtenstein, who appropriated and reproduced eye-catching comic aesthetics. While Pop is not medium-specific (nor, indeed, exclusive to the visual arts), its visual markers and techniques are closely associated with popular visual print media such as silkscreen prints, comic illustration, and tabloid photography. Art historian Thomas Crow theorizes Pop as an allegorical mode of art spanning visual arts, music, and design, and whose roots lie in the folk tradition. The representative and symbolic capacities of Pop, Crow argues, enable it "to be a domain in which fundamental conflicts can be rehearsed" and in which artists can model subjectivities and ways of being.[62]

In examining Pop aesthetics and their international manifestations, I draw on the work of curators of three recent exhibitions that articulated Pop beyond conventional Anglo-American centres: *The World Goes Pop* co-curated by Jessica Morgan and Flavia Frigeri at Tate Modern in London (2015–2016); *International Pop* co-curated by Darsie Alexander and Bartholomew Ryan at the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis (2015); and *Pop América* curated by Esther Gabara at the Nasher Museum of Art in Durham, North Carolina (2018–2019).[63] Although these scholars differ in their precise framing of Pop, they coincide in calling for an expanded geography of Pop.[64]

Morgan and Frigeri describe Pop as "…a *global* movement, with artists from many different regions joining in, creating a political, feminist, subversive, language of protest."[65] The first key aspect of this definition is the global framing of Pop. This view of a "global yet specific [P]op" emphasizes shared themes and concerns, while aiming to maintain a grasp on the local nature of various articulations of Pop developed in response to local environments.[66] Indeed, it is Pop's capacity to adopt and adapt

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[61] Morgan and Frigeri, *The World Goes Pop*, 52.
[62] Thomas E. Crow, *The Long March of Pop: Art, Music, and Design, 1930-1995* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 385.
[63] For corresponding exhibition catalogues, see: Jessica Morgan and Flavia Frigeri, eds., *The World Goes Pop: The EY Exhibition* (London: Tate Publishing, 2015); Darsie Alexander and Bartholomew Ryan, *International Pop* (Minneapolis: Walker Art Center, 2015); Esther Gabara, *Pop América, 1965-1975* (Durham, North Carolina: Nasher Museum of Art at Duke University, 2018).
[64] Morgan and Frigeri, 11.
[65] Morgan and Frigeri, 9.
[66] Morgan and Frigeri, 15.

to local visual vernaculars capable of fluidly transmitting messages to mass audiences that enabled its international currency throughout the 1960s and 1970s. In contrast to Morgan and Frigeri's *global* framing, Alexander and Ryan, curators of *International Pop*, describe the transnational, multifocal, simultaneous development of Pop as *international*. This nomenclature has the benefit of acknowledging multiple concurrent sites of development without imposing homogeneity, as art critic David Joselit notes.[67] To him, whereas *international* allows for interconnected-yet-distinct traditions, *global* implies a contraction or flattening of geopolitical specificities under the homogenizing image of the global. Building on Joselit, I understand Pop as an *international* – but not global – aesthetic phenomenon.

Drawing on both Joselit and Gabara, I make a similar distinction in positioning Pop as a *visual language*.[68] Inasmuch as *style* implies a primarily formalist orientation and *movement* suggests a set of shared political values and intentions, defining Pop as a *visual language* comprehends a range of local idiomatic manifestations of Pop and permits diverse and contradictory uses of Pop across ideological stances.

In addition to emphasizing a geographically expanded Pop, the curators were similarly united against the idea of reading Pop as a necessarily neutral or politically disinterested language. The second key aspect of Morgan and Frigeri's definition of Pop is the framing of Pop as a language of protest and subversion. Their exhibition presented the selected artworks as gestures of protest against various oppressive forces, including U.S. imperialism, dictatorial regimes, racism, and sexism. Morgan and Frigeri's curatorial frame equates Pop art with protest, and protest with radical values such as anti-imperialism, anti-fascism, and feminism. This framing thus falsely binds both the visual language of Pop and the discursive mode of protest to anti-oppression movements.

In the case of my objects of study, the paradigm of Pop as a language of radical protest is complicated by the extent to which Pop-inspired Cuban political posters constituted at best a partial or contradictory form of protest. While these posters were revolutionary insofar as they advocated for women's participation in public life, they also reinforced the patriarchal status quo through their

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[67] David Joselit, "'International Pop' and 'The World Goes Pop': Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, and Tate Modern, London," *Artforum* 54, no. 5 (January 2016): 230–31.
[68] Joselit, "'International Pop' and 'The World Goes Pop'," 230; Gabara, *Pop América, 1965-1975*, 10–19.

reproduction of gender-essentialist tropes, thereby complicating notions of protest as presented by Morgan and Frigeri. The paradigm of Pop as protest fails to consider rhetorical ambiguity or ambivalence in applications of this visual language. As my analysis of graphics in my third chapter will demonstrate, Cuban forms of Pop complicate this understanding by taking on discursive modes other than protest.

Pop América similarly engaged with Pop's politics, but effectively avoided collapsing its rhetorical range by acknowledging the potential contradictions of different concepts of freedom expressed in a Pop visual register. *Pop América* framed Pop as an ambiguous onomatopoeic verb that denotes a range of aesthetic experiments and rhetorical stances. Even in its framing of Pop in relation to struggles for artistic and political freedom, Pop América crucially acknowledged Pop's capacity to embody contradicting concepts of freedom. For instance, Gabara juxtaposes left-wing notions of freedom through international socialism with right-wing visions of freedom through economic liberalism, both of which were variably articulated through Pop aesthetics.[69] Noting these uses, art historian Jennifer Josten calls Pop "an equal opportunity language – available to… conservative and progressive causes alike."[70] I build on Gabara and Josten's articulations of Pop's capacity for political ambiguity by revealing how Pop representations of women in Cuban political posters reinscribed traditional gender roles even as they championed women's participation in socialism. It is with this understanding of Pop as an international visual language capable of articulating contradictory or equivocal political messages that I use the designation "Pop" to describe the guiding aesthetics of some of my objects of study.

Whereas Socialist Realism is characterized by its commitment to socialism, Pop's politics are rather ambiguous, allowing for a range of rhetorical applications. Despite these differences and others in form and origin, Socialist Realism and Pop share concern with realism.[71] Both use visual resemblance and narrative plausibility to reference tangible objects, subjects, and experiences. Regardless of form, realism facilitates the transmission of political messages by grounding ideas in the material reality of the mundane. This, in turn, facilitates both Socialist Realism and Pop's

[69] Gabara, *Pop América, 1965-1975*, 10–11.
[70] Jennifer Josten, "Revolutionary Currents: Pop Design Between Cuba, Mexico, and California," in *Pop América, 1965-1975*, ed. Esther Gabara (Durham, North Carolina: Nasher Museum of Art at Duke University, 2018), 73.
[71] Indeed, a radical form of Pop that emerged in Düsseldorf in the mid-190s was called Capitalist Realism.

capacity "to be [domains] in which fundamental conflicts can be rehearsed," and to convincingly give form to potential realities.[72] These features are central to my analysis of revolutionary posters of women, which sought, through representation, to produce new socialist feminine models.

C. Methodology & Study Rationale

This investigation of images of women in political posters commissioned in socialist Cuba between 1961 and 1976 addresses a gap in the existing scholarship by foregrounding the visual rhetoric of women's official representation. I situate myself in the field of Latin American Studies as a feminist visual culturist and art historian. By examining these official images of Cuban women as complex and persuasive vehicles for messages about gender, I take up feminist visual theorist Griselda Pollock's call for art historians to seriously consider the political significance of woman as a sign whose meaning underlies social order.[73]

Adopting a materialist feminist approach to visual research, I attend to the social production of gender in Cuba through a selection of revolutionary posters. I deploy the art historical methods of contextual and formal analysis, beginning by examining the social and material contexts under which these posters were produced and circulated. I then critically interpret the images to discern how they visually construct and reproduce narratives of womanhood in the revolutionary Cuban context. My analysis of the posters differentiates between those images that conform to a Socialist Realist visual language and those that more closely align with Pop aesthetics, with the latter beginning in the late 1960s. In differentiating these two sets of images, I seek to understand how, if at all, the use of one visual language or the other impacts the posters' rhetoric about the social role of women in Cuba. This comparison also aims to elucidate the uses of Socialist Realism and Pop in revolutionary Cuban graphics.

The following chapter details cultural and gender policies in revolutionary Cuba to reveal their role in shaping the production of images of women.

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[72] Crow, *The Long March of Pop*, 385.
[73] Griselda Pollock, "Women, Art and Ideology: Questions for Feminist Art Historians," *Woman's Art Journal* 4, no. 1 (1983): 41–42.

II. Context and Main Agents Influencing Images of Women in Revolutionary Cuba

In this chapter, I analyze how revolutionary cultural policy, public graphics, and gender policy shaped the production of images of women in revolutionary Cuba. My discussion of cultural policy highlights the fraught relationship between culture and politics that influenced poster production. I examine the two common interpretations of Castro's 1961 *Palabras a los intelectuales* (Words to the Intellectuals) speech, which outlined cultural policy in Cuba. The first interpretation, dominant throughout the 1960s, gave artists relative creative freedom as long as their work did not threaten revolutionary values. From 1969 to 1976, cultural institutions and officials adopted a more radical interpretation of Castro's speech. This dogmatic view insisted that artworks must embrace revolutionary values. Despite these divergent interpretations, throughout the period from 1961 to 1976 revolutionary cultural policy tolerated formal experimentation even as it compelled artists to make outwardly revolutionary, politically-committed work. This dynamic induced graphic designers and agencies to produce posters that were formally innovative and had a clear revolutionary message.

My discussion of public graphics underscores the conditions of poster production in revolutionary Cuba by examining posters' main commissioners and sites of display. I give an overview of two main poster-producing agencies, the COR and the ICAIC, and explain how these organizations distinguished between political and cultural posters. Subsequently, I elaborate on what Cuban essayist and communications scholar Jorge Bermúdez calls "the culturization of the political poster and the politicization of the cultural promotion poster," in other words, the cross-pollination between political and cultural graphics.[74] I contend that film posters provided a model for political posters to appropriate elements of the visual language of Pop into politically-charged, outwardly revolutionary images.

Lastly, my discussion of gender policy examines the image of women in Cuba in relation to the revolutionary government's structural containment of women's progress. Drawing on feminist scholars such as Kaufman Purcell, Brown, and Van Tassell, I demonstrate how the two barriers to women's progress (the state's reductive economic view of gender inequality and the FMC's status as

[74] "*la culturización del cartel político y la politización del cartel de promoción cultural*." Bermúdez, *La imagen constante*, 162.

the single national women's organization) influenced the image of women in Cuban revolutionary posters. I draw particular attention to the FMC's role as a key stakeholder and commissioner of posters for and about women.

I end the chapter by drawing parallels between cultural and gender policies in Revolutionary Cuba through an examination of Castro's expression "a revolution within the Revolution," used to characterize women's progress in a 1966 speech to FMC delegates.

A. Cultural Policy in Revolutionary Cuba

Following 1959, the revolutionary government sought to consolidate its power by shaping a political culture centred on values such as social equality, collectivism, and anti-imperialism.[75] The government implemented this political culture by fostering the engagement of the Cuban people with state policies and programs, and vice-versa.[76] Below, I outline the main debates of this post-1959 Cuban cultural policy, namely the discussions around the role of the arts in revolutionary society, and the aesthetics of Cuban socialism. Evident in these debates is the political paradox that Randall describes as "parallel influences of freedom and repression," in which the revolutionary state championed and democratized culture even as it controlled and restricted the cultural production.[77]

1. Institutionalization and Democratization of Culture

The state's goals to institutionalize and democratize culture defined Cuban official cultural policy and its execution in the two decades following 1959.[78] In practice, this meant that the state founded national cultural organizations that regulated public access to art through programming, publications, commissions, contests, etc. Among these institutions were the ICAIC, founded in

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[75] Political culture describes the assumptions members of a group share about their own history, rights, customs, and ways of being in the political and social spheres. Temma Kaplan, "Community and Resistance in Women's Political Cultures," in *Women and Revolution: Global Expressions*, ed. M. J. Diamond (Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands, 1998), 395–409.

[76] Chomsky, *A History of the Cuban Revolution*, 88.

[77] Margaret Randall, "El Quinquenio Gris," in *To Change the World: My Years in Cuba* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2009), 189–90, https://muse.jhu.edu/book/6163. Chomsky also comments on what she calls the "paradox in revolutionary cultural policies." Chomsky, *A History of the Cuban Revolution*, 89.

[78] A democratizing cultural policy strives to provide access to cultural goods and services to the largest possible portion of the population and across social, economic, and other barriers. See: Kevin V. Mulcahy, "Cultural Policy," in *Handbook of Public Policy*, ed. B. Guy Peters and Jon Pierre (London: SAGE Publications, 2006), 265.

1959, and the CNC, founded in 1961.[79] As the chief national cultural organization, the CNC centrally administered cultural programs at a national scale across the literary, visual, and performance arts.

The process of cultural institutionalization and centralization was not without conflict. In 1961, the ICAIC refused to screen Sabá Cabrera Infante's experimental documentary film *P.M.*[80] Devoid of discernible dialogue, the black-and-white film depicts scenes of Cuban nightlife featuring a range of racially diverse working-class women and men dancing, drinking, smoking, singing, and conversing. *P.M.* was considered by its critics as an ideologically ambiguous work. While the film's interest in working-class subjects and national popular culture conform to trends in Cuban revolutionary filmmaking of this period, its critics interpreted the work's emphasis on nightlife, consumption, and leisure as a nostalgic vision of capitalist, pre-1959 Cuba. State cultural officials received the film unfavorably on the grounds that it presented a partial and decadent view of Cuban life not in keeping with revolutionary values.[81] The ICAIC's censorship of *P.M.* prompted controversy and highlighted the need for an official national cultural policy to clearly define the relationship between culture and politics, and between cultural producers and the state.

2. Rights of Artists and Intellectuals

Alongside questions of public access to culture, officials and artists were also concerned with how to build socialism in Cuba through the arts.[82] Precipitated by these interests and by the *P. M.* affair, the BNJM hosted a series of cultural fora in June of 1961, to discuss the role and rights of the artist in a

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[79] Other key cultural institutions founded in this period include *Casa de las Américas* (House of the Americas, f. 1959) and the *Unión de Escritores e Artistas Cubanos* (Union of Cuban Writers and Artists, UNEAC, f. 1961). Though the roles of these organizations overlapped at times, they can be understood as enacting cultural diplomacy across a range of media, and representing and coordinating the cultural workforce, respectively. Jaime Sarusky and Gerardo Mosquera, *The Cultural Policy of Cuba. Studies and Documents on Cultural Policies* (Paris: UNESCO, 1979), 28–39**.** The CNC was responsible for planning, orienting and directing all cultural activities by official institutions… with the aim of responding to the State's cultural policy. It interpreted and supervised the execution of cultural policy in Cuba from its foundation on January 1961 to December 1976, when it was replaced by the Ministry of Culture. See: Osvaldo Dorticós Torrado, Fidel Castro Ruz, and Armando Hart Dávalos, "Ley 926: Fundación del Consejo Nacional de Cultura," in *Gaceta Oficial de la República de Cuba, Tomo Quincenal Número 1, Número Anual 5* (Havana: Republic of Cuba, 1961), 289.

[80] Guillermo Cabrera Infante, "Mea Cuba," in *The Cuba Reader: History, Culture, Politics*, by Aviva Chomsky, Pamela Maria Smorkaloff, and Barry Carr (Duke University Press, 2004), 481–87.

[81] "Encuentro de los intelectuales cubanos con Fidel Castro," *Revista Encuentro* 43 (Invierno 2006): 157–75.

[82] Doreen Weppler-Grogan, "Cultural Policy, the Visual Arts, and the Advance of the Cuban Revolution in the Aftermath of the Gray Years," *Cuban Studies* 41, no. 1 (2010): 144.

socialist society as well as the aesthetics of Cuba's nascent socialism. Speaking at the first forum on June 16, art critic José A. Baragaño suggested that the meeting's central topic should be the responsibility of the artist within the Revolution.[83] Writer Mirta Aguirre similarly opined that government officials present at the meeting should clarify the extent of creative freedom and the extent to which that freedom could endanger the Revolution.[84] Filmmaker Tomás Gutiérrez Alea voiced his concern over the problem of excessive centralization of organizations dedicated to artistic creation, which he feared could unnecessarily homogenize artistic production in Cuba.[85] At the closing of the BNJM cultural fora on June 30, Castro responded to discussants in his *Palabras a los intelectuales* speech. This seminal speech gave concrete expression to Cuban revolutionary cultural policy as the CNC's interpretations of Castro's words subsequently shaped the conditions of cultural production (including posters) in Cuba.[86] Following the tenet of cultural democratization, Castro's *Palabras* expressed the central goal of "developing art and culture… so they may become a true patrimony of the people."[87]

Palabras crucially articulated the rights of artists and intellectuals in revolutionary Cuba through the phrase "*dentro de la Revolución todo; contra la Revolución nada*" (within the Revolution, everything; against the Revolution, nothing).[88] This statement proposed a binary in which artworks could either operate within or against the Revolution, yet neglected to define whether to be "within the Revolution" meant to be openly in support of the Revolution. Castro's statement afforded two interpretations: the first allowed for work that was indifferent or neutral to the Revolution, and the second required all work to be openly in favour of the Revolution. Both views rejected works that challenged or

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[83] "*Creo que el tema fundamental tendría que ser aquel de la responsabilidad del artista dentro de la Revolución: cómo el artista debe encarar su creación, cuáles son las relaciones entre el artista y esa sociedad, y cómo debe ser llevada a cabo la labor creadora de los artistas y de los intelectuales. Éste yo creo que debe ser el tema que debemos tratar.*" "Encuentro de los intelectuales cubanos con Fidel Castro," 160.

[84] "*Yo creo que es muy importante que los compañeros del Gobierno que hoy tenemos aquí precisen algo que parece que no está claro: hasta dónde existe la libertad creadora y dónde esa libertad creadora se convierte ya en un peligro para la Revolución.*" "Encuentro de los intelectuales cubanos con Fidel Castro," 174.

[85] "*Es el problema de la excesiva centralización de organismos que se dedican a la creación artística…a través de una excesiva centralización de organismos de creación artística, corremos el peligro de que una sola tendencia sea la que pueda servir dentro de un medio. Y a lo mejor estamos evitando que sobrevivan otras tendencias que pueden ser igualmente valiosas.*" "Encuentro de los intelectuales cubanos con Fidel Castro," 169–70.

[86] Castro delivered this speech at a cultural forum in the BNJM in Havana on June 30, 1961.

[87] Fidel Castro Ruz, "Palabras a los intelectuales," in *Revolución, Letras, Arte,* edited by Virgilio López Lemus, (La Habana: Letras Cubanas, 1980), 15.

[88] Castro Ruz, "Palabras a los intelectuales," 15.

critiqued the Revolution. The question at stake was whether art and culture in revolutionary Cuba could exist independently of the Revolution. This binary made the extent of creative liberty uncertain, as artists who produced ideologically-ambivalent works risked being labelled as contra-revolutionary and sanctioned by cultural organizations like the CNC. Ultimately, this ambiguous statement encouraged artists to produce works that were outwardly aligned with revolutionary values in order to avoid controversy.

The first interpretation of *Palabras* was widely adopted by officials in the 1960s. Under this view, the state ostensibly only intervened in cultural production when officials deemed that an artwork posed a threat to revolutionary values. It is under this liberal interpretation that debates over the aesthetics of Cuban socialism flourished, allowing artists to challenge the paradigm of Socialist Realism, which had influenced early Cuban revolutionary visual culture, as the sole socialist mode of representation. Art historian David Craven reports that Castro endorsed formal experimentation in the arts, even as Eastern Bloc leaders denounced avant-garde art. To that end, Castro declared: "Our enemies are capitalists and imperialists, not abstract art."[89] As a result, the cultural climate of the early 1960s encouraged formal experimentation to visually articulate Cuba's nascent form of socialism. The visual language of Pop in particular offered Cuban poster designers a way to effectively deliver socialist political messages without the Soviet overtones associated with Socialist Realism. As I will discuss later in this chapter, film posters pioneered the use of experimental visual languages, as the ICAIC mobilized Pop and other avant-garde aesthetics to produce eye-catching images designed to beautify public space.

The second, more dogmatic interpretation of *Palabras* required works of art to espouse pro-revolutionary messages. In this view, the aesthetic value of artworks depended on their revolutionary commitment. Starting in the late 1960s, cultural officials increasingly adopted this radical interpretation of Castro's cultural policy, launching an era of cultural repression. Cuban literary critic Ambrosio Fornet termed this period as *Quinquenio Gris* (Gray Five-Year Period),

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[89] "*Nuestros enemigos son los capitalistas y los imperialistas, no el arte abstracto.*" Eva Cockcroft, "Cuban Poster", in *Cuban Poster Art: 1961-1982*, Westbeth Gallery, New York, 1983, pp 3-4, cited in Craven, "The Visual Arts since the Cuban Revolution," 81. In his 1965 essay, *El socialismo y el hombre en Cuba* (Socialism and Man in Cuba), Guevara similarly publicly rejected the Stalinist doctrine of Socialist Realism. Ernesto Guevara, "Socialism and Man in Cuba (1965)," in *Contemporary Latin American Social and Political Thought: An Anthology*, by Iván Márquez (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2008), 299-300.

extending roughly from 1969 to 1976.[90] Art historian Doreen Weppler-Grogan associates this period with the rise of soviet-style of economic planning propelled by Cuba's growing bonds with the Soviet Union and Eastern Bloc and ongoing economic strain.[91] The appointment of former military officer Luis Pavón Tamayo as director of the CNC in 1971 exacerbated this dogmatic trend. In its capacity as the central national cultural institution, the CNC enacted a wide range of restrictive practices. These included official scrutiny of artists' personal lives (including religious beliefs, sexual orientation, and social relations); dogmatic criticism; overt and covert censorship through exclusion from production and exhibition sites; and limitations on travel, teaching, and access to leadership positions in cultural organizations. These measures resulted in a narrowing of cultural production that favoured unambiguously pro-revolutionary artworks -- an orientation that at times clashed with artists' use of avant-garde visual language.[92] Although state power was not monolithic and the CNC could not exercise full oversight of cultural production, the censorship and personal scrutiny that marked the *Quinquenio Gris* drove artists such as Antonia Eiríz and Umberto Peña Garriga to stop producing art altogether.

Restrictions to cultural production during the *Quinquenio Gris* did not affect all creative fields and artists equally. For instance, Martínez began actively incorporating features of Pop art in his muralesque paintings in the late 1960s and continued working in this vein throughout the 1970s.[93] The dissemination of Pop aesthetics in Cuban visual arts in the face of the *Quinquenios* official rejection of Western cultural influences shatters the notion of total censorship in this period.

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[90] The Quinquenio Gris ended in 1976 with the establishment of the Ministry of Culture. Weppler-Grogan, "Cultural Policy, the Visual Arts, and the Advance of the Cuban Revolution in the Aftermath of the Gray Years," 145.

[91] Weppler-Grogan, 153.

[92] For example, Cuban painter Antonia Eiríz's installation, *Una tribuna para la paz democrática* (A Tribune for Democratic Peace, 1968), was received with hostility by cultural officials. Eiríz depicts an expressionist scene of a public meeting that is rendered more dramatic by the combination of a painting on canvas, mixed-media details, and installation elements. The work's canvas depicts an abstracted crowd from the vantage point of a podium arrayed with microphones. The faces of the figures are skeletal and wear grim or ambiguous expressions. Two stanchion ropes on either side of the podium hold three banners each, all of which bear the letters "P.C.V." and the words "Por una Paz Democrática" (for a democratic peace). The work was to be installed before chairs on which viewers could sit as if to await their turn to speak at the podium. Eiríz submitted the work to the 1968 national salon, where it was unsuccessfully considered for a prize. While the artist was not officially sanctioned, cultural officials' response to this work was hostile. UNEAC Vice President José Portuondo condemned the work as pessimistic and contra revolutionary. Others critiqued Eiríz's unflattering depiction of the crowd. Eiríz herself was under scrutiny for her association with the poet Heberto Padilla, who had published a book of poems that expressed criticism of the Revolution in 1968. Weppler-Grogan, 149–52. See: Heberto Padilla, *Fuera del juego* (Ediciones Universal, 1998).

[93] Goldman, *Dimensions of the Americas: Art and Social Change in Latin America and the United States*, 163.

Evidently some artists continued producing formally innovative work that dialogued with international avant-garde currents, possibly empowered by earlier official endorsement of artistic experimentation.

Overall, the equivocal standard of "*dentro de la Revolución todo; contra la Revolución nada*" had a dual effect on cultural production. On the one hand, this policy permitted artists to engage with novel and experimental forms beyond Socialist Realism. On the other hand, it compelled artists to produce outwardly pro-revolutionary work. This paradoxical dynamic of "parallel influences of freedom and repression" throughout the 1960s and 70s drove Cuban poster artists to produce images that were both avant-garde and politically committed.[94] I will examine such images in the next chapter.

B. Merging Cultural and Political Realms in Revolutionary Posters

1. Background to Revolutionary Graphics in Cuba

Posters occupied an important space in revolutionary Cuban visual culture due to their dual function as aesthetic objects and propaganda materials. Pre-1959 graphics production, though vibrant, had been based on commercial and electoral print advertising.[95] Morales Campos describes pre-revolutionary images of women as "erotic and prosaic."[96] Illustrator Andrés García Benítez' 1959 cover of the weekly magazine *Carteles de Cuba* (fig. 2) exemplifies the editorial emphasis on stylized and sexualized female bodies. The revolutionary government drastically changed the landscape of publicity in Cuba by nationalizing the media in 1960.[97] Graphic designer Antonio Fernandez Reboiro recalls that in 1965 the PCC issued a ban on the public display of

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[94] Randall, "El Quinquenio Gris," 189–90.

[95] Roughly twenty domestic marketing and publicity agencies were active in Cuba prior to 1959. These include *Publicitaria Siboney*, *Guastella*, *Álvarez Pérez*, *Mercado Survey*, and *Mestre-Conill*. See Vega Miche, "Los mejores carteles de nuestras vidas," 73; Aida Levitan, "Advertising and Public Relations," in *Cubans, an Epic Journey: The Struggle of Exiles for Truth and Freedom*, by Sam Verdeja and Guillermo Martínez (Reedy Press LLC, 2012), 206.

[96] "*Carteles y anuncios comerciales reflejaron ilustraciones gráficas con desenfrenadas representaciones pictóricas eróticas y prosaicas; con cuerpos de mujeres que incitaban a la tentación. Igualmente en carteles empleados para anunciar películas… predominaba la representación femenina con propósitos amorosos, caderas anchas y vestuarios semidesnudos; mostrando muslos y pechos.*" Morales Campos, "La mujer en el cartel de la revolución cubana [Women in the Poster of the Cuban Revolution]."

[97] Existing publicity agencies coalesced into two entities: *Consolidado de Publicidad* (Consolidated Publicity Company), founded and directed by Mirta Muñiz and dissolved in 1961, and *Agencia Intercomunicaciones* (Intercommunications Agency), directed by Gloria Pérez and later centralized in 1967. These two early state-run firms provisionally produced graphic campaigns in the social and cultural realms as well as new political propaganda, and were refashioned and centralized under the COR by the end of the decade. See: Vega Miche, "Los mejores carteles de nuestras vidas," 74.

non-government propaganda.[98] The ban sought to centralize public graphics by bringing them into the exclusive realm of the state and its affiliates. This ban, Fernandez Reboiro argues, allowed posters to shift away from their pre-revolutionary commercial function as advertising objects.[99] In the context of public images of women, commercial and political forces vied for attention.[100] This shift thus also implied a departure from the image of women as a commercial trope. By placing the public image of women under state control, the 1965 ban on non-state propaganda relegated alternative or dissenting images of women to private or informal realms. This policy thus served to centralize and homogenize the public image of women in Cuba in an otherwise highly competitive visual economy.

2. The COR's Political Poster and the ICAIC's Cultural Poster

Scholars of Cuban graphics such as Bermúdez and Morales Campos conventionally divide posters into political and cultural.[101] The first category includes political, mobilization, and commemorative posters, and the latter encompasses film and cultural events posters. These categories correspond to distinct modes of production and display associated with specific poster producing agencies. For instance, the COR largely produced and circulated political posters, while the ICAIC produced cultural posters to promote films and adorn public spaces. This distinction, along with the above-mentioned cross-pollination of the political and cultural categories, is at the basis of my claim that Martínez's ICAIC poster for the 1968 film *Lucía* influenced the image of women in subsequent political posters.

Founded in 1962, the COR was the publicity office of the central committee of the PCC and was responsible for producing and coordinating the dissemination of a wide range of domestic propaganda in the form of posters, banners, billboards, books, brochures, and other print material.

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[98] García-Rayo, *El cartel de cine cubano*, 248–49.

[99] García-Rayo, 248–49.

[100] Swiss photographer Luc Chessex, who worked as a freelance photographer for the CNC and artistic director and itinerant reporter for Prensa Latina in Cuba between 1961 and 1975, illustrates the dizzying blend of graffiti, commercial and political propaganda about women in public space. Chessex brings together capitalist and socialist images of women by juxtaposing fashionable urbanites, neon-light figures, sugarcane workers, cabaret performers and FMC members. For an illustrative collection of Chessex's photographs of Cuban women taken between 1962 and 1970, see the visual essay companion to his retrospective exhibition held at the Musée de L'Elysée in Lausanne in 2014: Daniel Girardin, *Cherchez la femme: un essai photographique (Look for the Woman: A Visual Essay)* (Musée De L'Elysée, 2014).

[101] Bermúdez, *La imagen constante*, 45; Reinaldo Morales Campos, *Carteles de la Revolución Cubana: Arte y Comunicación* (Habana: Ediciones Logos, 2014), 40-41.

[102] The COR's *Equipo Técnico* (technical team) produced posters for state organizations such as the FMC, which made it a key agent in the construction of public images of women. In addition to its national office in Havana, the COR had provincial offices (e.g., COR Matanzas and COR Pinar del Río) tasked with producing provincial propaganda campaigns in response to local needs and under national direction.[103] In 1974, the COR was restructured as the *Departamento de Orientación Revolucionaria* (Department of Revolutionary Orientation, DOR, 1974-84), but continued to fulfill the function of creating official publicity materials. Posters published by the COR in its capacity as the state's propaganda department underwent close oversight and can most reliably be interpreted as expressions of official discourse.[104] These conditions of production suggest that COR's posters of women closely align with official gender policy.

COR's social and political propaganda posters were displayed through revolutionary Cuba's system of *murales colectivos populares* (popular collective murals).[105] Throughout the country, these boards were placed at the entrance of the headquarters of each local neighbourhood organization, called a *Comité de Defensa de la Revolución* (Committee for the Defense of the Revolution, CDR). Posters were also displayed at schools, work centres, and public service centres such as post offices and hospitals, where they were collectively maintained by workers and volunteers. Writing about *murales* in 1975, art historian David Kunzle notes their ubiquity, remarking that "since there is a CDR to every side of a city block or its equivalent, one cannot walk more than a few yards without being confronted with one of these popular art compilations."[106] Kunzle's description, along with photographs from

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[102] Based on DOR's archival records as of 2003, U.S. archivist Lincoln Cushing estimates that the agency produced between 6,000 and 8,000 distinct poster designs. Cushing notes that unlike the ICAIC poster archives, the COR archives remain severely under-researched such that the usual print run, the number of copies of a single poster design produced at one time, is unknown. Lincoln Cushing, *Revolución!: Cuban Poster Art* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2003), 12-13, 115; David Craven, *Art and Revolution in Latin America, 1910-1990* (New Haven : Yale University Press, 2002), ix.
[103] Bermúdez, *La imagen constante*, 167.
[104] Bermúdez, 143.
[105] Unlike traditional murals which usually consist of images permanently painted on walls, Cuban revolutionary *murales* are large public bulletin boards that showcase impermanent assemblages of newspaper and magazine clippings, state-commissioned posters, and handmade signs and notes on current and upcoming events. See: David Kunzle, "Public Graphics in Cuba: A Very Cuban Form of Internationalist Art," *Latin American Perspectives* 2, no. 4 (1975): 100-102; Bermúdez, *La imagen constante*, 161.
[106] Kunzle, "Public Graphics in Cuba," 102.

the period, indicate that the COR's political posters were ubiquitous in the urban landscape of revolutionary Cuba.[107]

The ICAIC was founded on March 24 of 1959 with the goal of developing a national filmmaking industry and mobilizing cinema's capacity to shape public consciousness under founding director Alfredo Guevara.[108] In 1961, the ICAIC created a publicity and public relations department.[109] This group was tasked with producing posters for films that would be distributed to cinemas and mobile projection units across the country.[110] Reports of the sites of display for ICAIC posters suggests that urban dwellers likely would have encountered cultural and political posters indistinctly.[111] In 1963, the ICAIC began commissioning promotional film posters on a competitive, freelance basis.[112] Though posters had to be approved by ICAIC Director of External Relations Saúl Yelín, Cuban designers Fernández Reboiro and Alfredo Rostgaard note that designs were rarely rejected.[113] U.S. scholars such as Kunzle and Cushing similarly note that the ICAIC's designers enjoyed ample creative freedom relative to those working within the COR.[114] This freedom facilitated designers' engagement with international avant-garde visual languages such as Pop, which they gained access to through North American and international publications and other media. Through these formal experiments, Cuban revolutionary posters began to garner international recognition in the mid

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[107] Photojournalistic snapshots of urban scenes of the 1960s by photographers such as Mario García Joya, Deena Striker, and Luc Chessex illustrate the weighty presence of both pre- and post-revolutionary graphics of women in Cuba.
[108] Kunzle, "Public Graphics in Cuba," 91; Joel del Río, "Some Memories of the Most Controversial Cuban Films," *Estudos Avançados* 25, no. 72 (August 2011): 145–59, https://doi.org/10.1590/S0103-40142011000200013.
[109] Initially directed by Mario Rodríguez Alemán and designer Rafael Morant. Graphic artists Olivio Martínez, Eduardo Muñoz Bachs, and Holbeín López joined this group shortly thereafter. Vega, "Los mejores carteles de nuestras vidas," 68–85, 248–49.
[110] In Havana, these posters were exhibited throughout the city on *paragüitas* (literally "little umbrellas") that served as public cultural notice boards along the central boulevards of the bustling Vedado district, on the façade of the ICAIC headquarters, and at each individual cinema theatre. See: García-Rayo, 248–49; Sara Vega, "Soy Cuba, de cierta manera," *Cuban Studies* 4 (2010): 74.
[111] In urban centres outside the capital, film posters were displayed within cinema theatres. Old posters were commonly exhibited in movie theatre lobbies such that cinemas actively functioned as poster galleries. García-Rayo, 84, 249; Vega, "Soy Cuba, de cierta manera," 74. By 1962, film and film posters also reached the countryside through the ICAIC's mobile cinemas, which brought portable projection equipment to isolated rural communities that lacked permanent projection spaces. Falicov indicates that by 1962, the ICAIC's mobile cinemas had organized 4,603 screenings for 1.2 million spectators, reaching over 3 million viewers by 1976. While Kunzle claims that by 1964, the ICAIC had hosted nearly 48,000 mobile film screenings, reaching 8 million spectators in schools, day care centres, farms, factories and prisons. Tamara Falicov, "Mobile Cinemas in Cuba: The Forms and Ideology of Traveling Exhibitions," *Public* no. 40 (September 18, 2012): 104–7; Kunzle, "Public Graphics in Cuba," 91–92.
[112] García-Rayo, *El cartel de cine cubano*, 245–47.
[113] García-Rayo, 248–49, 268–69.
[114] Kunzle, "Public Graphics in Cuba," 93; Cushing, *Revolución!: Cuban Poster Art*, 10.

1960s.[115] Specifically, it was the ICAIC's bold designs that brought international recognition to Cuban posters. This recognition bolstered the ICAIC's independence from the CNC and helped affiliated designers continue to produce formally experimental and ideologically ambivalent images during the years comprising the *Quinquenio Gris*.[116]

While the distinction between political and cultural posters is useful in tracing paths of production and dissemination of images, these categories should be understood in dialogue. In this interchange, Cuban political graphics embraced the avant-garde aesthetics pioneered by the ICAIC's film posters while cultural posters adopted political subjects and themes. Medium is important in this distinction. While the ICAIC's film posters were primarily produced as silkscreen prints, the COR's production structure and equipment more often relied on the more mechanized process of offset printing. Designers of political offset posters at times emulated the visual effects of silkscreen printing such as reduced colour schemes, abstraction of fine details, and the appearance of translucent and overlapping forms. Distinctions between cultural and political posters are further obscured by the fact that publishing agencies did not cultivate agency-specific styles, and designers would often work on a freelance basis for both cultural and political agencies.[117] The more permissive creative environment of the ICAIC allowed designers to experiment with novel forms such as Pop which they could then incorporate into their work in political poster production.

C. Revolutionary Gender Policy: The FMC and Women's Revolution from Above

As noted in the previous chapter, changes in women's status were driven by the state's social reform program.[118] Gender equality was not a state priority in its own right; authorities tended to align women's goals with those of the Revolution, and particularly with economic development goals.

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[115] For instance, a poster by Esteban Ayala Ferrer won first prize in the Bach International Contest in the German Democratic Republic in 1964 and in 1965, Antonio Fernández Reboiro's film poster Harakiri (1964) won a prize in the International Film Poster Competition organized by The Cinema Sixteen Society in Sri Lanka. Menéndez, "Apuntes para una cronología del diseño gráfico en Cuba (de 1950 a La Actualidad)."

[116] Weppler-Grogan notes that cultural workers affiliated with the ICAIC were particularly active in resisting obstacles to the production and dissemination of experimental and innovative work during the Quinquenio. Weppler-Grogan, "Cultural Policy, the Visual Arts, and the Advance of the Cuban Revolution in the Aftermath of the Gray Years," 148.

[117] Kunzle, "Public Graphics in Cuba," 93–94.

[118] Kaufman Purcell, "Modernizing Women for a Modern Society: The Cuban Case," 267–69; Van Tassell, "Women, Politics and Contemporary Cuba," 210-211; Pérez-Stable, "Cuban Women and the Struggle for 'Conciencia,'" 52; Brown, "Women in Post-Revolutionary Cuba," 49–50.

Two specific factors within this top-down reform program hindered the achievement of gender equality. Firstly, the state viewed gender inequality as an extension of economic inequality and consequently prioritized women's incorporation into the workforce above other strategies to combat gender-based oppression. Secondly, the absence of an independent grassroots women's movement prevented women from developing a robust collective political consciousness and advocating for themselves. These two factors concern the image of women in political posters because state-produced images of women encoded layers of beliefs and ideas about women and their struggle. The lack of independent women's organizations, along with a ban on non-government propaganda, meant that Cuban women did not have the necessary conditions to meaningfully contest official public images of women.

1. The State's Engelsian Understanding of Gender Inequality

In his *Speech to the Women* at the closing of the Congress of Women of the Americas on January 16 1963, Castro proclaimed "woman must necessarily be revolutionary… because [she] is exploited as a worker and discriminated against as a woman."[119] This view of women as workers underlies revolutionary gender policy. The PCC embraced German communist philosopher Friedrich Engels' theories on the origins of gender inequality, in which women's lower social status is traced to their lack of access to financial resources as reflected by lower employment rates, lower incomes, and systemic exclusion from high wage positions.[120] The state's understanding of gender inequality as reducible to economic inequality shaped the policies it implemented to advance women's status, which emphasized women's incorporation into the national workforce.[121] This Engelsian message of workforce participation as the path to women's liberation permeates official discourse on women in the 1960s and 70s Cuba and extends to political posters.[122] As I elaborate in the next chapter, the

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[119] Fidel Castro Ruz, "Speech to Women" (address, Closing Ceremony of the Congress of Women of the Americas, Chaplin Theatre, Havana, January 15, 1963).

[120] Ana Maria Corrarello, "La retórica de Fidel Castro por la lucha de la igualdad de la mujer," *African Yearbook of Rhetoric* 4, no. 2/3 (January 1, 2013): 119–23; Brown, "Women in Post-Revolutionary Cuba," 49–50.

[121] Brown, "Women in Post-Revolutionary Cuba," 49.

[122] For instance, Linguist Ana Maria Corrarello's analysis of Castro's closing speech at the Second Congress of the Cuban Women Federation, on November 29, 1974, notes evidence of this Engelsian view in Castro's rhetoric on the struggle for gender equality. Castro likens the state's struggle to integrate women into the workforce to women's struggle for gender equality. By stating "*que las mujeres se incorporen al trabajo es una cuestión elemental de justicia*" (women's incorporation in the workforce is a matter of justice), the revolutionary leader aligns women's liberation with their participation in extra-domestic labour. In the same speech, he also asserts that "*la fuerza del trabajo masculina no alcanza*" (the male labour

state's model for building gender equality through women's participation in extra-domestic labour serves as a narrative premise for official images of women. Depictions of labouring women in particular referenced this official discourse of labour as the path to women's liberation.

2. Feminine, Not Feminist: The Federation of Cuban Women

In addition to the state's reductive materialist view of gender inequality, women's advancement in revolutionary Cuba faced a second barrier: the lack of an independent grassroots women's movement. The FMC was the single mass organization dedicated to women in Cuba, and thus responsible for enacting revolutionary gender policy. Vilma Espín Guillois, one of a handful of women revolutionary leaders, founded the FMC in August 1960 by consolidating preexisting women's groups with the aim "to prepare women educationally, politically and socially to participate in the revolution."[123] Unlike pre-revolutionary women's organizations dating back to the 1930s, which had been largely independent or affiliated with labour organizations, the FMC was a state institution that responded to the directives of the revolutionary leadership since its inception. Despite its grassroots organizing activities, the FMC primarily served as a top-down organization whose functions were to inform women of the state's agenda and implement official policies.[124] Political posters constituted an important means for the organization to reach women nationwide. While the FMC did not make its own posters, which were produced by the COR, the organization commissioned the majority of revolutionary posters for and about women.[125] Consequently, the FMC is a crucial stakeholder in the public image of women in revolutionary Cuba.

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force is not enough) and "*existe una necesidad imperiosa de la Revolución de la fuerza de trabajo femenina*" (the Revolution has a great need for women's labour force). This statement suggests an awareness that women's economic integration serves the state's economic development and recalls Kaufman Purcell's observation that women's issues were subordinate to state goals in Cuba. Corrarello, "La retórica de Fidel Castro por la lucha de la igualdad de la mujer," 119–23; Kaufman Purcell, "Modernizing Women for a Modern Society: The Cuban Case," 267–69.

[123] These pre-revolutionary women's organizations include *Unidad Femenina Revolucionaria*, la *Columna Agraria*, *Brigadas Femeninas Revolucionarias*, *Grupos de Mujeres Humanistas* and *Hermandad de Madres*, among others. Corrarello, "La retórica de Fidel Castro por la lucha de la igualdad de la mujer," 115; Murray, "Socialism and Feminism, Part I," 64; Maxine Molyneux, "State, Gender and Institutional Change: The Federación de Mujeres Cubanas," in *Women's Movements in International Perspective: Latin America and Beyond*, ed. Maxine Molyneux, Institute of Latin American Studies Series (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2001), 267–69.

[124] Ilja A. Luciak, *Gender and Democracy in Cuba* (University Press of Florida, 2009), 15–18; Murray, "Socialism and Feminism, Part I," 64.

[125] Lowery, "Female Imagery in the Political Posters of China and Cuba, Using the Soviet Union as a Model", 121. I corroborated this claim with my own archival research at the BNMJ in March 2018.

As the single national women's mass organization, the FMC did not present the pluralism of smaller women's organizations. Espín Guillois' conservative description of the organization as "feminine, not feminist" hints at the limits of seeking to organize all women at a national scale. In order to maximize its appeal to the largest number of Cuban women, the FMC pragmatically adopted an approach that emphasized shared traditional gender values and prevented the organization from seriously engaging with more radical feminist politics for fear of alienating members.

The FMC's structure as an official mass organization hindered women's feminist *concientización* (political consciousness-raising), which as per Pérez-Stable and Murray could only be achieved independently from the state. The absence of an independent feminist movement prevented the type of grassroots consciousness-raising work that would have allowed Cuban women to articulate gender oppression in their own terms.[126] Given the FMC's scale and top-down structure, Cuban women had limited means to organize and advocate for themselves independently, let alone shape the public image of women.

Two values underpinned the FMC through the 1960s and 70s: revolutionary commitment and gender essentialism, or the view of womanhood as a set of fixed biological and psychological characteristics shared among all women. As I will discuss in the next chapter, these values shaped the organization's public images that mobilized the figure of the *miliciana*-mother, an everywoman who is at once maternal and committed to socialism. FMC-commissioned images of women sought to respond to state goals and did not necessarily correspond to the experiences of Cuban women.

D. The Containment of "*una revolución dentro de la Revolución*"

In a speech at the closing ceremony of the fifth plenary session of the FMC on December 9 1966, Castro described women's mobilization in post-1959 Cuba as "*una revolución dentro de otra revolución*" (a revolution within another revolution).[127] This expression, later simplified to "*una revolución dentro de la*

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[126] Murray, "Socialism and Feminism," 1979, 104; Pérez-Stable, "Cuban Women and the Struggle for 'Conciencia,'" 52; G. Lane Van Tassell, "Women, Politics and Contemporary Cuba: A Research Note," 210.

[127] "*Cuando nosotros llegamos esta noche aquí, le dije a un compañero que este fenómeno de las mujeres en la Revolución era una revolución dentro de otra revolución. Y si a nosotros nos preguntaran qué es lo más revolucionario que está haciendo la Revolución, responderíamos que lo más revolucionario que está haciendo la Revolución es precisamente esto; es decir, la revolución que está teniendo lugar en las mujeres de nuestro país.*" Fidel Castro Ruz, "Discurso Pronunciado Por Fidel Castro Ruz, En La Clausura de La V Plenaria Nacional de La FMC" (Estadio Sandino, Santa Clara, Las Villas, Cuba, December 9, 1966).

Revolución" (a revolution within *the* Revolution), has become synonymous with women's mobilization under the revolutionary government. Castro's phrase celebrates women's progress, but also suggests boundaries for women's advancement within the larger social reform program of the Revolution. The use of an indefinite article denotes that the women's revolution ("*una revolución*") is one among many possible revolutions. Conversely, the use of the definite article marks "*la Revolución*" (the Revolution) as unique and primary. *La Revolución* thus takes semantic and grammatical precedence over the women's revolution. Through this language of containment, the phrase "*una revolución dentro de la Revolución*" renders unthinkable the possibility that the women's revolution may surpass the boundaries set by the Revolution.

This language of confinement, of existing *within* the Revolution – that is, within the ideological boundaries and possibilities of the cultural-political program of the revolutionary government – is not unique to women. Castro's 1961 speech to artists and intellectuals sets a precedent for this language of containment by similarly articulating the rights of artists to work "*dentro de la Revolución*" (within the Revolution). Official rhetoric thus describes both the intellectuals of *Palabras a los intelectuales* and the women of the "*revolución dentro de la Revolución"* first and foremost as revolutionary subjects whose primary political commitment is to the Revolution. I contend that this rhetorical parallel unites women and artists in a presumed allegiance to the Revolution that is at the core of graphic propaganda about women in revolutionary Cuba.

As the products of artists working within the Revolution on the one hand, and articulations of the state's vision of women on the other, political posters of women were doubly subject to official scrutiny. The images that constitute my case-studies were produced in a cultural policy context that tolerated formal experimentation, encouraged outwardly pro-revolutionary messages, and facilitated blurred boundaries between the visual languages of political and cultural posters; and a political context that imposed the interests of the state through a monolithic women's organization. The next chapter examines the rhetorical consistency of political posters of women that employ Socialist Realism and Pop modes of representation in order to understand how the cultural and gender policies that were surveyed in this chapter have shaped depictions of women in revolutionary Cuba.

III. From Socialist Realist to Pop Aesthetics in Revolutionary Images of Women

In this chapter, I analyze official images of women in relation to the state's rhetoric on gender. Referencing my discussion of Socialist Realism in chapter one, I begin by examining the influence of Socialist Realist aesthetics on posters of women in early 1960s Cuba. I explain how the limitations of Socialist Realism prompted Cuban artists to seek out alternative visual languages such as Pop Art to articulate local visions of socialism. Using Martínez's 1968 poster for the film *Lucía* as an anchor point, I discuss how Pop aesthetics shaped images of women beginning in the late 1960s. My comparison of Socialist Realist and Pop-inspired images of women reveals rhetorical continuities regarding women's social role between these two modes of representation. By demonstrating this continuity, I conclude that the stylistic shift to Pop did not change official messages about gender in Cuba. Therefore, in the case of state-commissioned posters of the late 1960s and 70s for and about women, artists employing a Cuban Pop vocabulary continued to visually articulate patriarchal gender relations.

A. Socialist Realist Images of Women

Descriptions such as "national in form, socialist in content" present Socialist Realism as a dynamic, adaptable visual language which, like Socialism itself, was suitable for export.[128] In revolutionary Cuba, Socialist Realism provided an accessible symbolic regime and early aesthetic model for revolutionary art, namely an art that would help build revolutionary society by unambiguously endorsing the views and values of local socialist authorities, thereby fulfilling the mandate of Castro's *Palabras*.[129]

1. Limits of Women's Liberation in Cuban Socialist Realist Posters

Given the bond between state socialist values and visual rhetoric in Socialist Realism, it is not surprising that the image of women in Cuban Socialist Realist posters directly articulated the official rhetoric on gender. As discussed in chapter one, Socialist Realism visualizes socialist ideals through

[128] Groys, "The Typology of the Nonexistent," 436.
[129] Pablo Alonso González, "Monumental Art and Hidden Transcripts of Resistance in Revolutionary Cuba, 1970-1990," *Journal of Latin American Cultural Studies* 25 (April 11, 2016): 22.

the exemplary figure of the *typical*, which models a socially desirable subject. In the context of public images of women, the *typical* consisted of visual articulations of the new Cuban socialist woman, an everywoman who simultaneously embodied socialist militancy and remained legible within pre-revolutionary canons of femininity. The four posters I discuss below promote this rhetoric by depicting women through social types that emphasize women's civic and economic participation in the revolutionary complex as *milicianas*, *federadas* (FMC members), and *workers*. These posters use images of children and flags to symbolically affirm women's connection to maternity and the nation. In doing this, they combine aspirational socialist identities with traditional feminine values of maternity and self-sacrifice in the service of the nation. The absence of adult male and racialized female figures in these images tacitly reinforce pre-revolutionary gender and racial hierarchies. In these ways, these Socialist Realist images of women visually expose the limitations of revolutionary Cuba's top-down approach to women's liberation.

The composition of the FMC-sponsored poster *Federada ocupa tu puesto* (FMC member, take up your post, c. 1960s, fig. 3) suggests an association between women and nation. The artist placed a waving Cuban flag in full colour at the top of the image, just above *miliciana* depicted in grisaille. Complementing the movement suggested by her right-facing profile, the vivid red text directly below the figure conveys an urgent call to action through active voice and imperative tense: "*ocupa tu puesto*" (take up your post). This text interpellates viewers as *federadas* (FMC members), urging them to join three national sectors: revolutionary military defense, sanitary brigades, and production. In joining this call, women become *milicianas*, volunteers, or workers. The placement of flag, figure, and text from top to bottom and in decreasing distance from the viewer traces a didactic path that connects the intended female viewer to the nation through her adoption of the *miliciana* identity model. The persuasiveness of the image depends on the viewer's identification with the *miliciana* figure. The Socialist Realist *typical*, or aspirational model, is this politically committed socialist woman.

Other posters echo this structure of a central inspirational character, situating her as a leader through her placement and scale relative to other figures. Using Socialist Realist aesthetics, the FMC developed a compelling image of feminine leadership that nonetheless adhered to pre-revolutionary

gender politics by challenging neither patriarchy nor male state leadership. Two anonymous 1962 posters for the first national FMC congress, *Saludamos el 26 de Julio con nuevas metas para nuestro 1er Congreso* (We greet the 26th of July with new goals for our first Congress, 1962, fig. 4) and *1er Congreso Nacional / Federación de Mujeres Cubanas* (1st National FMC Congress, 1962, fig. 5) illustrate this power dynamic. As visual documents of the FMC congress, these posters synthesize the organization's most pressing priorities in 1962. Both designs feature central anonymous female figures leading other women and children, and objects that allude to education, sports, national defence, and agrarian work. These images are consistent with revolutionary discourse on women insofar as they emphasize women's growing participation in these areas while foregrounding traditional feminine roles of mother and caregiver. The placement of the central female figure before other women and children in *Saludamos el 26 de Julio* suggests feminine leadership while grounding women in a gender-segregated space. In *1er Congreso Nacional*, the notion of leadership is similarly conveyed through the central female figure's large scale relative to her surrounding figures, her central placement, and her upraised pointing arm in an iconic Castroesque gesture. Here the artist uses formal analogy to imbue the female leader with the authority and values of an established male leader. In this sense, the central female figure of *1er Congreso Nacional* can be understood as an extension of the predominantly male state leadership. By choosing not to depict adult men, both of these posters elide the possibility of female leadership over men. They thus effectively delimit women's leadership to the traditionally feminine realms of childcare and early education. Women can and should lead, these images suggest, but only within the hierarchic logic of patriarchy and within their assigned realms.

Concerns about the power hierarchies embedded in these images on the basis of gender also extend to race. These representative examples consistently depict the aspirational new socialist woman as light-skinned. In a country characterized by ethnic diversity and marked by the legacies of transatlantic slavery, this trope perpetuates racist and colourist ideologies by excluding racialized women from ideal womanhood. Through the omission of racialized women and adult men, these Socialist Realist images of women reproduce racial and patriarchal hierarchies that place light-skinned subjects, and especially men, at the apex of Cuban society.

2. Socialist in Content, Conspicuously Soviet in Form: Socialist Realism in Cuba

While Socialist Realism provided an early model for understanding the role of art in the new socialist Cuba, some artists rejected this doctrine on the basis of its association with cultural repression, and questioned its capacity to articulate a local form of socialism. Cubans' unease about Socialist Realism was exacerbated by the movement's conspicuous visual tropes, such as hypertrophied arms, small heads, and Soviet iconography, which read as foreign to Cuban artists and viewers already weary of cultural Stalinism.[130] Posters such as *Día internacional de la mujer: paz, socialismo y solidaridad latinoamericana* (International Women's Day: Peace, Socialism, and Latin American Solidarity, c. 1961-69, fig. 6), commissioned by the *Central de Trabajadores Cubanos* (Workers' Central Union of Cuba), reveal the limitations of directly transplanting Eastern European visual tropes and references into the Cuban context. In this image, we look up at a stout woman in a heroicizing frame such that her arm and bust are emphasized. While she presents a plausible image of a working Cuban woman, no phenotypic or sartorial cues distinguish her as a local figure. She holds a spanner and grain sheaf in her right hand. While not entirely foreign, these attributes of industrial and agrarian labour do not hold symbolic importance in tropical Cuba. Unlike many socialist states of this time, Cuba had neither the robust urban proletariat base suggested by the spanner, nor the large-scale grain production implied by the sheaf. A machete and local crop such as sugarcane or tobacco would have better reflected the specificity of Cuban agrarian labour. This Socialist Realist poster is thus demonstrably "socialist in content," but hardly "national in form." It is precisely this tension between the Soviet overtones of this mode of visual language and Cuban visions of socialism that spurred local artists to seek alternative ways to depict a tropical socialism.

Writing about Cuban posters in 1971, Cuban critic Edmundo Desnoes identifies a tension between Soviet Socialist Realism and U. S. Abstract Expressionism as central to revolutionary visual culture. [131] This debate, he explains, pitted Cuban artists' rights to freedom of expression and artistic

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[130] Some artists linked Socialist Realism and its avid promotion by state officials to cultural repression. For example, writing in the field of public monuments, cultural historian Pablo Alonso González discusses Cuban artists' contestation and rejection of Socialist Realism on the basis of its perception as hegemonic, Sovietised discourse in the 1970s. Alonso González, 21–24.

[131] Developed in New York in the 1940s, primarily in painting, Abstract Expressionism is an art movement that favours nonrepresentational form; and is described as free, spontaneous, resulting from personal expression; and attentive to

innovation against the imperative to make cultural objects that would be understood by most Cubans. As noted in the previous chapter, revolutionary leaders Castro and Guevara openly encouraged aesthetic experimentation beyond Socialist Realism. As early as 1965 Guevara framed Socialist Realism as outdated in its roots in 19th-century art, asking "why endeavor to seek in the frozen forms of Socialist Realism the only valid recipe?"[132] Painterly posters conceived in the light of Socialist Realism in the early 1960s, gave way to poster designs characterized by flat areas of colour, no tonal transitions, and heavy outlines which eventually came to typify Cuban Pop graphics by the end of the decade. Art historian and curator Mercedes Trelles Hernández proposes that the mid-1960s saw two emerging localized forms of Pop in Cuba: one for export and one for domestic consumption.[133] Cuban domestic Pop grew out of discontent with the form of Soviet-imported Socialist Realism and its capacity to convincingly reach Cuban spectators. Addressing these concerns, Cuban Pop artists drew on folk visual traditions such as commercial sign-painting, and national historical icons and recent revolutionary leaders. In this sense, both the subject and form of Cuban pop derived from the local visual vernacular so as to be legible and meaningful to a national audience. Cuban Pop is thus populist insofar as it visually emulates national *cultura popular* (folk culture): the cultural forms and expressions produced by the most economically marginalized class for both utilitarian and decorative purposes, including sign-painting and other forms of vernacular illustration.

B. Pioneering Cuban Pop and Raúl Martínez's *Lucía* (1968)

1. Cinematic and Graphic *Lucías*

Martínez (1927-1995) was one of the earliest exponents of Pop in Cuban graphic art through his serial portraits of Cuban national independence hero José Martí, *Quince repeticiones de Martí* (Fifteen

materiality. In the aftermath of World War II, this movement marked a shift in the conventional creative centre of modern painting from Paris to New York City and was notoriously promoted by the CIA during the Cold War in an effort to advance U. S. cultural diplomacy. Edmundo Desnoes, "The poster in the Cuban revolution: 1959-1970," in *Cubaanse affiches: Stedelijk museum, Amsterdam, 7 mei tot en met 6 juni 1971*, by Ada. Stroeve and Ad Petersen (Amsterdam: Stedelijk museum, 1971), 2–6; David Anfam, *Abstract Expressionism: The International Context*, ed. Joan Marter (New Brunswick, N.J: Rutgers University Press, 2007), 1–6.

[132] Guevara, "Socialism and Man in Cuba (1965)," 299.

[133] Mercedes Trelles Hernández, "Latin American Pop" (Lecture, Global Pop Symposium, London, UK, March 15, 2013).

Iterations of Martí, 1966). Trained first as a painter at Havana's Academia San Alejandro and later at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago in 1953, Martínez had a successful career as an abstract expressionist painter and graphic designer prior to 1959.[134] After the Revolution, he worked as a freelance designer for the ICAIC and other cultural institutions. Martínez's iconic 1968 poster *Lucía* (fig. 7) for the eponymous feature film directed by Humberto Solás pioneered the use of Pop aesthetics to depict women in Cuban revolutionary graphics.

Combining elements of historical period drama and documentary film, Solás' *Lucía* tells three fictionalized stories of women's role in Cuban history. The homonymous fictional protagonists live through key revolutionary periods: the Cuban War of Independence (1895-1899); the revolution of 1933, which mobilized workers and students but ultimately failed to bring about lasting political reform; and the years that followed the Revolution of 1959. While the first two Lucías are played by professional actors Raquel Revuelta and Eslinda Nuñez, Solás cast Adela Legrá, an agrarian worker and FMC activist, to play the contemporary Lucía. Despite the film being named after its three female heroines, their political engagement and contributions to history are consistently mediated by men.[135] Nonetheless, both the film and Martínez's work emphasize women's protagonism in the making of Cuba's history. In the poster, for instance, the three Lucias appear unaccompanied by men.

Martínez's poster for *Lucía* uses a saturated colour scheme of bright yellow, orange, pink, blue, and green. Flat areas of colour and dense black outlines broadly delineate objects from ground. Three close-up female portraits dominate the image. The portraits are arranged in two unequal rows and chronologically from left to right and top to bottom such that the contemporary Lucía appears alone on the bottom row and is thus closest to the viewer at standard display height. The group's racial diversity is perhaps obliquely suggested by the use of a different colour for each woman's skin. A

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[134] Shifra M. Goldman, "Painters into Poster Makers: A Conversation with Two Cuban Artists," in *Dimensions of the Americas: Art and Social Change in Latin America and the United States* (University of Chicago Press, 1994), 145.

[135] The first Lucía sews shirts for the rebel army because her brother Felipe is a mambí, a guerrilla independence soldier. In the 1930s, the second Lucía becomes politically active after meeting Aldo, a student militant. Lastly, 1960s Lucía finds her access to education facilitated by an unnamed male alfabetizador (a volunteer literacy teacher), and her capacity to participate in public life hindered by her domineering husband Tomás. Notably, contemporary Lucía's conflict of competing domestic and socialist commitments remains unresolved. Humberto Solás, *Lucía* (Instituto Cubano de Arte e Industria Cinematográfica, 1968).

decorative pattern of curving green and blue stripes connects the three portraits and suggests circular motion and recession into a cylindrical, three-dimensional space. Superimposed on these stripes are three nondescript flowers and a single five-pointed star which recalls the Cuban flag. In keeping with Pop's interest in appropriating and adapting popular media, these iconic illustrations are based on film stills. The portraits are abstracted enough to obscure their likeness to the actresses, but retain attributes of the fictional characters they represent, such as hats, hairstyles, and adornments. This abstraction frames the three anonymous female characters as historical icons through their visual resemblance to Martínez's earlier portrait of national hero José Martí in *Quince repeticiones de Martí*. Unlike the preceding Socialist Realist political posters, this image suggests rather than describes a message of women's civic participation. *Lucía* asserts the active presence of women throughout the country's history by juxtaposing the three women with decorative elements reminiscent of the Cuban flag such that women and nation are indivisible.

2. *Lucía*'s Legacy: Making Women's Posters Pop

Examining Martínez's *Lucía* alongside Heriberto Echeverría del Pozo's FMC-commissioned poster *Marzo 8... Día Internacional de la Mujer* (March 8… International Women's Day, 1971, fig. 8) reveals the formal influence of Pop inspired images on subsequent renderings of women in political posters.[136] The former is a silkscreen poster and the latter offset. Despite these crucial differences in production technique, Echeverría del Pozo has taken care to imitate the look of silkscreen printing associated with popular ICAIC posters. Consequently, the two posters share characteristics of Pop graphics: a rich, saturated colour scheme; flat areas of colour separated by dense outlining; and repetition of motifs with variations. Like *Lucía*, *MARZO 8* presents three female portraits that are abstracted but legible. Unlike the portraits in *Lucía*, those in *MARZO 8* are not associated with characters in a popular film; the viewer must rely on formal and contextual cues to decode them. The use of bright colours starkly differentiates these two images from earlier Socialist Realist images

[136] This image, alongside Estela Díaz's 1974 International Women's Day poster, is one of the most internationally circulated political posters of women produced in Cuba, being most recently reproduced in the cover of an issue of Radical History Review (Issue 136, January 2020) dedicated to gender and sexuality in Cuba.

of women and conveys the country's tropicality. The expressive and variable use of warm colours to indicate skin similarly alludes to Cuba's complex racial makeup.

Echeverría del Pozo's poster was produced by the COR to mark International Women's Day (IWD). This is evident in the text panel at the foot of the poster, which reads "*Marzo 8… Día Internacional de la Mujer*" (March 8... International Day of the Woman). Cuban celebrations of IWD date back to 1931, having strong ties to national labour movements and roots in European and Soviet traditions of commemorating working women.[137] Though this is the standard phrasing for this date in Spanish, the use of the singular "woman" here supports an interpretation of the figures as one woman in three roles rather than three distinct characters. She is thus a single archetypal everywoman intended to represent women broadly as well as a manifestation of the Socialist Realist *typical*, meant to model socially desirable traits. Whereas *Lucía* renders visible the film's narrative, *MARZO 8* can be understood as telling a story through a series of images. In the upper section, the woman collects fruit on a green field in a scene of agrarian work. In the middle, the spools and muted background tone indicate an industrial setting. Here the woman's red headwrap denotes her status as a factory worker. Lastly, in the lower register, framed by the dark blue background to suggest an interior or night-time scene, she holds an infant. This last image identifies her as a mother or caregiver. Collectively, the three images map the range of feminine labour sanctioned by the Revolution in both private and public spheres.

While the chromatic richness, formal abstraction, and serial repetition of *MARZO 8* directly echoes *Lucía*, its visual rhetoric precedes Martínez's design. The insistence on celebrating labouring and maternal women links this 1971 Pop-inspired poster to Cuban Socialist Realist posters of the 1960s and state rhetoric on women as workers. As I demonstrate below, other 1970s political posters of women similarly take up Pop visual strategies to articulate state visions of ideal socialist womanhood within the recurring roles of worker and *miliciana*. The Socialist Realist tactic of the *typical* thus remained central to these images' gendered rhetoric, even as the central figures took on more localized avant-garde features. In this sense, Cuban poster artists of this period employed both

[137] Araceli Alonso, "Cuba: The Search for Women's Rights in Private and Public Life," in *Women's Rights: A Global View*, ed. Lynn Walter (Westport: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2001), 43–56.

Socialist Realism's insistence in modelling reality through *typical* inspirational figures and Pop's language of local adaptability, appropriation, and fluidity.

C. The Political Poster Goes Pop

As mentioned in my first chapter, even if at first glance revolutionary posters executed within Socialist Realism and Pop visual languages appear dramatically different, both visual languages nonetheless work within the register of realism: they use visual elements that suggest real-world referents to convey visual messages meant to be understood by a broad public. Pop-inspired revolutionary posters encoded many of the same messages of earlier Socialist Realist images of women by employing the didactic strategy of the *typical*. These new images continued to frame women exclusively in relation to the Revolution through two feminine types: the worker and the *miliciana*.

1. Labour as Liberation: The Woman Worker in Pop Posters

The first type (woman as worker) directly relates to the state's Engelsian view of workforce participation as the path to women's liberation, as discussed in the previous chapter. Pop-inspired images of working women framed extra-domestic labour not only as a path to liberation, but as a form of liberation itself through the use of aspirational worker figures. Underlying this view of extra-domestic work as liberation is the failure to consider women's traditional domestic work as socially-productive. These images only praise women's labour in the agrarian, industrial, and service sectors.

As I noted in my analysis of the CTC's poster *Día internacional de la mujer*, artists working within Socialist Realism struggled to craft visuals that reflected the specificities of labour in Cuba given the movement's visual tropes rooted in Soviet culture. Despite not following the aesthetics of Socialist Realism, the Pop-inspired images I analyze in this section keep to the criteria of "national in form, socialist in content" by articulating local forms of the *typical*.

Raimundo Alfonso's 1970 offset International Women's Day poster (fig. 9), published by the Matanzas provincial branch of COR, exemplifies the rhetoric of liberation through extra-domestic work. The central figure is a faceless feminine figure rendered in neon orange, green, and blue

organic forms. While the figure's abstraction makes her relatable, her attributes of a traditional wide-brimmed work hat, headscarf, and long-sleeved shirt situate her as an agrarian worker. She holds a green bundle that can be interpreted as sugar cane stalks, a nationally significant crop.[138] This image balances Pop's visual language with context-specific elements to deliver a vivid, locally grounded call for women to join the agrarian workforce. Alfonso combines the novel visual language of Pop with a familiar message of women's incorporation into the workforce. The text on the cane bundle clarifies: "*para lograr la plena emancipación de la mujer es preciso que la mujer participe en el trabajo*" (to achieve women's full emancipation it is necessary that women participate in the workforce). By using *trabajo* (work or workforce) rather than *producción* (production) to describe this new female responsibility, this phrase overlooks mundane and unremunerated gendered forms of work women already participate in, such as care work. The text tethers women's emancipation specifically to their remunerated, extra-domestic labour. Alfonso's Pop illustration thus presents a concrete form of extra-domestic labour as emancipation, such that the distinction between work and liberation remains ambiguous. This message is further supported by the image's abstraction, which dissociates the worker figure from any signs of toil and physical exertion associated with field labour.

Like Alfonso's poster, another work by Echeverría del Pozo, *Tabaco* (Tobacco, 1972, fig. 10) calls on women to join the workforce, in this case in the tobacco industry. This call to action proclaims "*hay un trabajo que tú puedes hacer, incorpórate*" (there is a job you can do, join) using the informal second-person address. Again, given the dual meaning of *trabajo* as both work and job, the language presupposes that the female viewer is not already engaged in a range of domestic forms of labour. Del Pozo draws on pre-revolutionary commercial visual culture as he employs elements associated with art nouveau, a style that dates back to the 1880s. The pastel tones, dense outlines, and organic decorative curls that form this image allude to the Cuban design tradition of tobacco *marquillas*, in which feminine figures often bore an allegorical function. Following the rhetorical logic of tobacco marquillas, the figure at the centre of *Tabaco* may be understood as an allegory of feminine labour. Her distinctive head kerchief and short-sleeved collared shirt support this interpretation. As in the

[138] Sugarcane was first planted in Cuba in the 16th century, but the crop would not become a defining feature of the national economy until the 18th century, following the Haitian Revolution in 1791. Sugarcane export continued to play a crucial role in the national economy in the 1970s. See: Manuel Moreno Fraginals, *The Sugarmill: The Socioeconomic Complex of Sugar in Cuba, 1760-1860.* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1976).

poster analyzed above, this design features a central aspirational female worker figure that corresponds to the Socialist Realist *typical* even as she mobilizes a range of historical and avant-garde visual languages.

These two images of working women exemplify Pop's adaptability and capacity to generate images that were national in form and socialist in content insofar as they reflected the specificities of labour in Cuba and conformed to the state rhetoric of women's labour as liberatory. While this aesthetic orientation effectively appropriates and adapts aspects of existing local visual traditions to make eye-catching and attractive visuals, Pop does not significantly modify the official rhetoric, which directly associates women's progress in the struggle for gender justice to their incorporation into the extra-domestic workforce.

2. Pop *Milicianas*

The second pictorial archetype that framed women within the Revolution is the *miliciana*. Once established in the popular cultural imaginary throughout the 1960s, the figure of the *miliciana* easily migrated from Socialist Realist to Pop images. The two Pop-inspired posters I discuss below articulate the rhetorical containment of women within the Revolution by depicting women exclusively as revolutionary fighters.

Echeverría del Pozo's 1972 offset poster for International Women's Day (fig. 11), produced by the COR, depicts the *miliciana* as the epitome of socialist womanhood. Similarly to the images discussed above, this poster marks International Women's Day as a key occasion to celebrate women. As a consequence, the image presents those aspects of womanhood the revolutionary state deemed desirable and worthy of celebration. The central figure is a young woman pictured from the shoulders up. A crown of vividly-coloured flowers and butterflies adorns her head, affirming her femininity, while her bright red rifle characterizes her as a leftist militant. These symbols of youthful femininity and armed struggle are harmoniously integrated: the flowers appear to extend out of the rifle's end. The figure's hopeful upward gaze suggests a narrative of armed struggle as a justifiable means to secure a peaceful socialist future. By celebrating the *miliciana*, an armed socialist militant, as *typical*, this poster commends women only insofar as they embody revolutionary militancy.

Another International Women's Day poster, *Nuestra solidaridad combatiente con todas las mujeres del mundo* (Our Combative Solidarity with all Women in the World, c. 1970s, fig. 12), echoes this paradigm of celebrating female socialist militancy. The work uses photomontage to build up an image of women's revolutionary fight across the world. Using Pop's appropriation tactic, the group of feminine figures in the center appears to have been drawn from news clippings. The central figure, a young woman in military gear holding a gun, embodies the *miliciana*. She is surrounded by other armed women racially coded as Asian and Black, as well as by others holding protest signs. The group of figures is enveloped by a mauve-orange rose on a flat mint green field, which can be interpreted as symbolic of both femininity and socialism.[139] By making the celebration of women contingent on women's political commitment to state forms of socialism, these two posters objectify and instrumentalize women, binding women's social value exclusively to their contributions to the Revolution.

3. What Difference Did Pop Make?

Pop visual language allowed artists to anchor posters in Cuban culture by citing and appropriating pre-revolutionary visual forms, rendering new socialist messages familiar. Where Socialist Realism was synonymous with decades of Soviet propaganda, Pop's association with youth, novelty, 1960s counterculture, and the avant-garde made it a compelling novel vehicle for promoting socialism in Cuba. Pop graphics appealed to Cuban audiences in ways that Socialist Realist images could not because the former cited, appropriated, and adapted familiar, pre-revolutionary visual forms already popular on the island. Pop's connection to capitalist visual culture is especially relevant. By aligning themselves with familiar commercial imagery such as tobacco marquillas and fashion magazines, Pop posters of the 1970s inserted themselves in existing national traditions of persuasive commercial imagery while downplaying their status as socialist propaganda.

In contrast to the multi-figure compositions of Socialist Realist posters, and perhaps as a reflection of individualism, Pop-inspired posters favoured single-figure compositions. As a result, images of motherhood and feminine leadership nearly disappeared in Pop posters of women in favour of

[139] The red rose has been commonly recognized as a symbol of socialism since the mid-19th century. See: Stefan Arvidsson, *The Style and Mythology of Socialism: Socialist Idealism, 1871-1914* (Routledge, 2017).

depictions of single labourers and armed *milicianas*. These Pop poster designs de-emphasized women's traditional reproductive and caregiving roles but did not refute them. By leaving women's relation to motherhood off the printed image, Pop posters of the 1970s avoided drawing attention to women's double burden of extra-domestic and care work at a time when such overload was increasingly salient.

As my analysis of Cuban posters demonstrates, while the shift from Socialist Realist to Pop aesthetics facilitated the creation of eye-catching, more nationally resonant images, it did not fundamentally change the rhetoric of images of women in revolutionary Cuba. Pop-inspired posters, like Socialist Realist ones, presented women as workers and *milicianas*, roles that elevated revolutionary values and commitment as prescribed by the state. Through this formal shift, posters continued to define women and women's liberation in relation to the Revolution. This rhetorical continuity was facilitated by Pop's capacity to represent real-world referents. Pop-inspired posters of women used the Socialist Realist tactic of representing inspirational-yet-plausible *typical* feminine figures. In other words, the use of *typical* figures of worker and *miliciana* were not contingent on style. In this sense, Pop acted as a vehicle for transmitting official models of femininity in Cuba just as Socialist Realism had in the Soviet Union, China, and elsewhere.

IV. Conclusion

From 1961 to 1975, posters constituted a significant avenue for visually articulating and communicating official views on the role of women in socialist Cuba. Through poster commissions by state affiliates such as the FMC and the CTC, and through the work of publicity agencies such as the COR (later DOR), the state made a concerted effort to shape the public image of women to serve its gender policy. The persistence of pre-revolutionary commercial feminine imagery, along with the local public's distrust of Soviet imagery led artists to seek alternative ways to visually articulate revolutionary poster propaganda. Poster artists combined the persuasive logic of Socialist Realism with the saliency of Pop aesthetics to create compelling images of women to elicit support for the Revolution. Model womanhood, as depicted in these posters, entailed participation in revolutionary institutions, but did not otherwise stray from conventional, pre-revolutionary gender roles. By crafting a public image of women as revolutionary agents embedded in economic and political life, the state rhetorically channelled women's struggle for emancipation into "a revolution within the Revolution."

In their insistence on depicting women as workers and *milicianas*, both Socialist Realist and Pop posters of women articulated official gender policy by exclusively celebrating women whose values and commitment placed them "within the Revolution." Conflating extra-domestic labour with feminine liberation, posters of working women visually reinforced the state's Engelsian stance on gender inequality that bound women's emancipation to national economic development. Moreover, the celebration of *milicianas* in Women's Day posters tacitly supplanted the social category of woman with a prescriptive model for socialist womanhood. Given the state's monopoly on posters in public space, the effect of these images of women as models of femininity should not be overlooked. Representational choices across Socialist Realist and Pop posters presented key silences, such as the erasure of Black women, gender non-conforming women, and those who did not identify as revolutionary.

My analysis of Cuban revolutionary posters addresses a historical case in which Cuban artists and institutions used Pop visuals to convey socialist propaganda. Two features of Pop facilitated its use in Cuban revolutionary posters. Firstly, Pop's ethos of appropriation and mass circulation made it an

adaptable visual language. Whereas Socialist Realism signified foreign Soviet culture, poster artists and designers used Pop tactics of appropriation to recall local visual vernaculars, producing novel images that read as Cuban. Secondly, Pop's alignment with representation (rather than abstraction) enabled the translation of the Socialist Realist rhetorical strategy of the *typical* –an inspirational figure who embodied socialist values– onto Pop visual language. The result of this translation were Pop-inspired images that could persuasively communicate socialist codes through appealing, familiar forms.

My work thus contributes to the study on women and the Cuban revolution in Cuban political posters from 1961 to 1976 in two ways. First, it fills a lacuna in the literature by presenting an integrated analysis that considers how socio-political circumstances surrounding gender construction, material culture, and visual form came together in the official construction of gender in Cuba. Second, my investigation contributes to the recent discussions on the political uses of Pop outside of the Western Bloc by describing how Cuban artists and poster agencies mobilized local forms of Pop to promote official models of socialist femininity.

A. Three Iterations of Woman as Sign: The FMC Logo from 1960 to Today

Pollock theorizes that since "woman as a sign signifies social order... the category Woman is of profound importance to the order of a society."[140] The stability of women as a sign depends on gender constructions, which must be repeatedly produced and negotiated across a range of cultural practices. The posters I examined in this study attest to the political imperative of regulating the meaning of the category Woman in revolutionary Cuba. In their struggle to integrate revolutionary commitment into existing models of womanhood, revolutionary posters of women invoked and reinscribed familiar patriarchal gender roles and tropes even as they mobilized novel visual languages. While posters no longer hold the political and cultural currency they had in revolutionary Cuba, the FMC continues to operate as the national organization for Cuban women. Whether overt or implicit, the task of defining women as a sign is at the heart of this mass organization. As I demonstrated above, the FMC's posters were an important component of this practice. The FMC's

[140] Pollock, "Women, Art and Ideology," 43.

logo, as the visual expression of the organization's identity, has similarly participated in this signifying process for the last six decades.

In this final discussion, I connect the signifying functions and visual rhetoric of woman as sign in revolutionary posters of women with the FMC logos, which have represented the organization since its inception in 1960. By looking at the organization's three logos –the first used from 1960 to 1967; the second implemented from 1967 to 2009; and the third ongoing– I extend my discussion of woman-as-sign in socialist Cuba into the present in order to illustrate how the image of the revolutionary woman developed in the 1960s and 70s continues to stand for both the FMC and the Revolution.

The first FMC logo (fig. 13), active between the organization's founding in 1960 and 1967, features a faceless woman protectively holding a child while a white dove hovers above. All three figures are contained in a globe grid. The woman's lack of identifying features encourages viewers to take her place in the scene.[141] The choice to depict an unclothed infant rather than an older child emphasizes biological aspects of motherhood, namely childbearing. In the absence of other attributes, the woman is defined primarily as a mother. In this sense, this first logo conflates womanhood with biological motherhood.

Given the strong history and cultural presence of Catholicism in Cuba, this scene of mother, child, and white dove recalls Marian iconography. This allusion to religious iconography appears to fly in the face of socialist secularism. Nonetheless, both Catholic and Socialist Realist imagery share the convention of using inspirational subjects to instill moral values and behaviour in their viewers. While stylistically ambiguous, this logo's Marian imagery parallels Socialist Realist posters' use of the *typical* by offering viewers an ideal model subject. By choosing to represent itself as a woman who recalls the well-known and respected figure of the Virgin Mary, the FMC visually espoused a traditional understanding of women as mothers – blending femininity, morality, and spirituality in a single inspirational figure. This venerable maternal figure is at once compatible with dominant pre-revolutionary gender roles and emerging socialist notions of womanhood. This embodiment of

[141] Scott McCloud, *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art*, Reprint edition (New York: William Morrow Paperbacks, 1994), 30-31.

the FMC in its first seven years coincides with the organization's consolidation and goal to organize women at a national scale. She recalls Espín Guillois' description of the FMC as "feminine, not feminist," reinforcing a familiar social order while emphasizing shared gender values across racial and class differences. By grounding itself in shared traditional values of maternity and faith, this symbolic woman likely served to reassure 1960s viewers of the FMC's legitimacy in its early years.

The second logo (fig. 13), launched in 1967, maintains the older logo's globe and mother-and-child composition, but radically changes the central figure. Still faceless and maternal, the central figure now bears the attributes of a *miliciana*: a rifle and a military uniform in the form of a collared shirt and beret. Unlike her predecessor, the *miliciana*-mother looks away from the swaddled child in her arms. In her analysis of this iteration of the FMC logo, sociologist Tanya L. Saunders similarly concluded: "women now have control over their reproduction, but they are also still largely responsible for what they reproduce."[142] This new design symbolically expands the role of women by framing them as both mothers and socialist militants, yet upholds parenthood as a firmly gendered responsibility. While the *miliciana* stands alone in the logo, her uniform suggests participation in a larger collective struggle. Through these features, the FMC's 1967 logo emphasized women's mass mobilization within the Revolution in tandem with her traditional maternal role. Like its Marian predecessor, the *miliciana*-mother functioned in the mode of the Socialist Realist *typical*; she modelled a socially desirable identity to whom female viewers should aspire. By adopting a miliciana mother as the icon of Cuban women, the FMC promoted two facets of womanhood: revolutionary commitment and motherhood. In a period where the revolutionary leadership called on women to volunteer and join the paid workforce, this image urged women to mobilize in service of the Revolution.

This logo change also coincides with a broader radicalization of revolutionary Cuban graphics in the wake of Che Guevara's death in Bolivia in 1967. While the 1967 *miliciana*-mother logo did not mobilize Pop aesthetics, it did circulate alongside and within Pop-inspired posters of women. Starting in 1970, the COR began to reproduce the logo in posters commissioned by the FMC. Some FMC posters even featured an enlarged form of the *miliciana*-mother logo as a design element in its

[142] Tanya L. Saunders, *Cuban Underground Hip Hop: Black Thoughts, Black Revolution, Black Modernity* (University of Texas Press, 2015), 53, 200.

own right. For instance, *Profundizando la acción revolucionaria de la mujer* (Deepening Women's Revolutionary Action, 1974, fig. 14), a poster produced by the Pinar del Río provincial office of COR, and *Federada: estudia y serás parte activa del futuro* (FMC Federate, Study and You Will Be an Active Part of the Future, c. 1970s, fig. 15), an FMC-commissioned poster, both use this logo as the central image. Through its mass circulation in public graphics such as these, the 1967 FMC logo gave iconic form to the trope of the *miliciana*-mother, enabling this figure to officially represent Cuban women for nearly forty years.

As of 2009, the FMC logo no longer depicts a *miliciana*-mother, but a colourized black-and-white photograph of founder Vilma Espín Guillois (figs. 13, 16), who passed away in June of 2007. Two key factors differentiate the newest logo from earlier iterations: first, a shift in central figure from a trope to a historical figure, and second, a shift in medium from illustration to photography.

In contrast with the previous two iterations, the subject of this logo is a concrete historical person: Espín Guillois. This change from anonymous trope to iconic portrait fundamentally changes the FMC's claim to woman as a sign. On the one hand, the organization now becomes directly associated with Espín Guillois and her vision for women: it is Vilma's FMC. This shift tethers a living, dynamic organization to one of its founders and is in keeping with the revolutionary leadership's tendency to transform living leaders into visual icons after their death. On the other hand, Espín Guillois' photograph also serves to crystalize and memorialize a single view of this figure. The photographic medium historicizes Espín Guillois as a committed revolutionary figure. While the precise context of the original photograph is unknown, it was likely taken at a public event between the 1960s and 1980s. A youthful Espín Guillois stands, facing the viewer, a smiling face turned to the left in partial profile. She wears the attributes of a miliciana: military uniform shirt, beret, and rifle. By presenting Espín Guillois as a militant of the 26th of July Movement, the logo mobilizes photography's indexicality to nostalgically recall a historical moment at the height of the Revolution's idealism. The now-deceased Espín Guillois is memorialized as a miliciana. In this sense, she embodies the Revolution inasmuch as she represents Cuban women, once again rhetorically binding Cuban femininity to revolutionary commitment.

While the first two illustrations articulate archetypal figures, the photographic portrait presumes and rewards familiarity with the sitter. For instance, Espín Guillois holds her hands in the foreground; a wedding ring is clearly visible on her left hand. For viewers familiar with Espín Guillois, the ring alludes to her marriage to fellow rebel Raúl Castro, Fidel Castro's younger brother and current first secretary of the PCC. As Espín Guillois's image now represents the FMC, the new logo underscores the FMC's kinship with the largely male revolutionary leadership. Given that there are better-known photographs of Espín Guillois as a miliciana that do not emphasize her hands, this inclusion is meaningful, if not intentional. In alluding to marriage, a patriarchal social institution that regulates relations between women and men, the new logo continues to situate ideal socialist womanhood within conventional gender relations. Through its marriage metaphor, the latest photographic poster woman for the FMC proposes a vision of Cuban women as inextricably committed to the Revolution and its male leadership, drawing continuity between past and present through a nostalgic view of the Revolutionary period.

The materials I examined in this study represent a fraction of the visual signifying practices employed by official organizations between 1961 to 1975 to negotiate the meaning of the category woman in Cuba according to emerging socialist paradigms. The sheer number of images of women produced in this period attests to the political imperative of this task. The meaning of woman as sign depends on unstable gender constructions which must be repeatedly produced and negotiated across a range of cultural practices. Socialist Realism and Pop aesthetics offered discursive strategies, namely the *typical* and appropriation of folk and popular culture, through which these new visions of women could be constructed, circulated, and promoted. In their struggle to integrate revolutionary commitment into existing models of womanhood, the state and its affiliates produced images that invoke and condone conventional patriarchal gender roles. While the images have fundamentally shaped the meaning of woman in Cuba and continue to do so today, the process of conceptualizing womanhood is ongoing, dynamic, and far from monolithic.

Figures

Fig. 1. Alberto Korda. *Campesina* [Countrywoman](c. 1960). Gelatin silver print; dimensions variable.

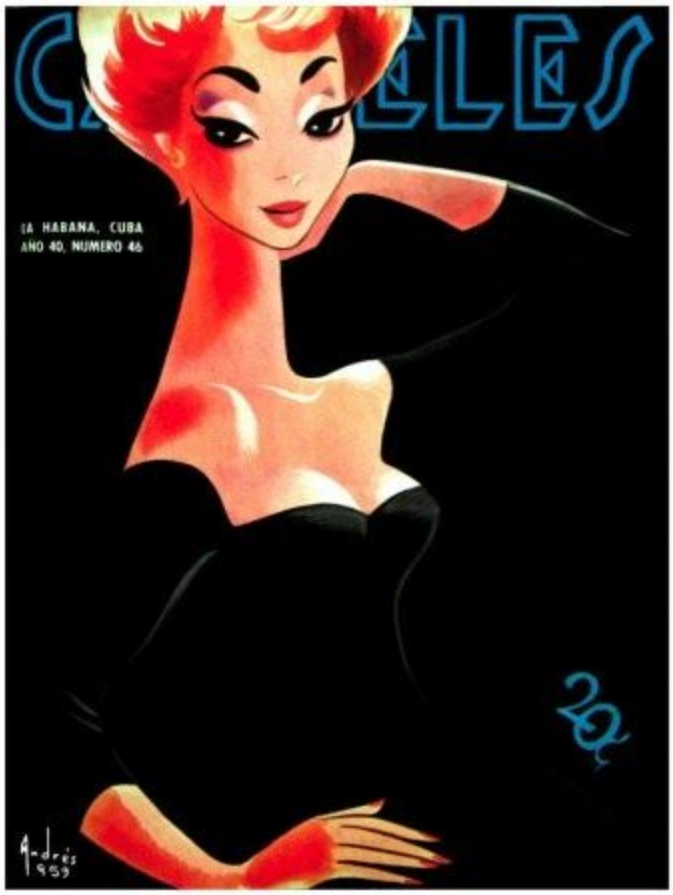

Fig. 2. Andrés García Benítez, Carteles Magazine. *Cover design for Carteles Issue 40, Number 46* (1959). Offset print of gouache and ink drawing; 24.4 x 31.7 cm.

Fig. 3. Unknown, FMC. *Federada ocupa tu puesto* [FMC member, take up your post](c. 1960s). Print; 68 x 45 cm. José Martí National Library. Havana, Cuba.

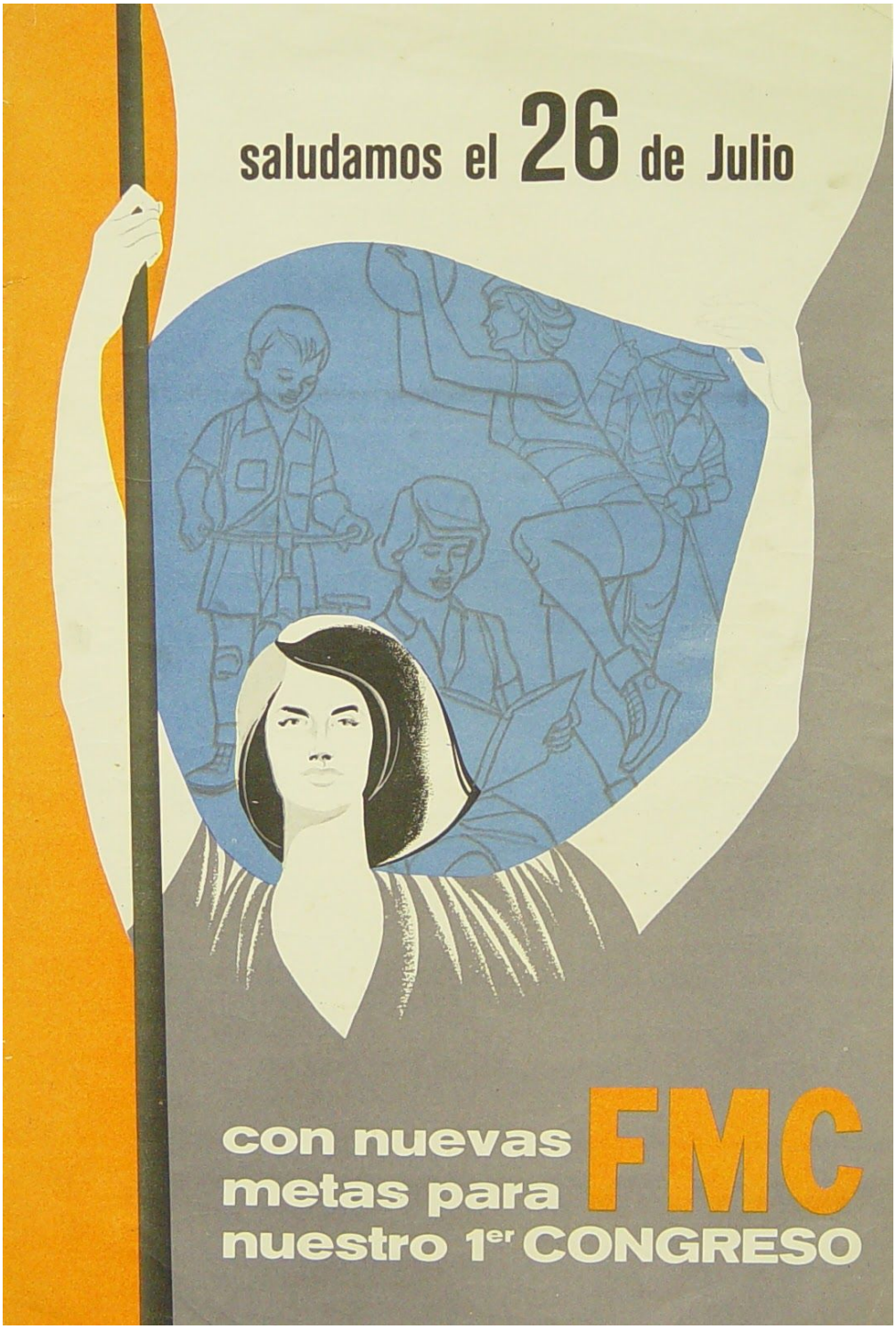

Fig. 4. Unknown, FMC. *Saludamos el 26 de Julio con nuevas metas para nuestro 1er Congreso* [We greet the 26th of July with new goals for our first Congress](c.1962). Print; 71 x 48 cm. José Martí National Library. Havana, Cuba.

Fig. 5. Unknown, FMC. *1er Congreso Nacional / Federación de Mujeres Cubanas* [1st National FMC Congress](1962). Print; 75 x 50 cm. José Martí National Library. Havana, Cuba.

Fig. 6. Unknown, CTC. *Día internacional de la mujer: paz, socialismo y solidaridad latinoamericana* [International Women's Day: Peace, Socialism, and Latin American Solidarity](c. 1961-69). Print; 50 x 38 cm. José Martí National Library. Havana, Cuba.

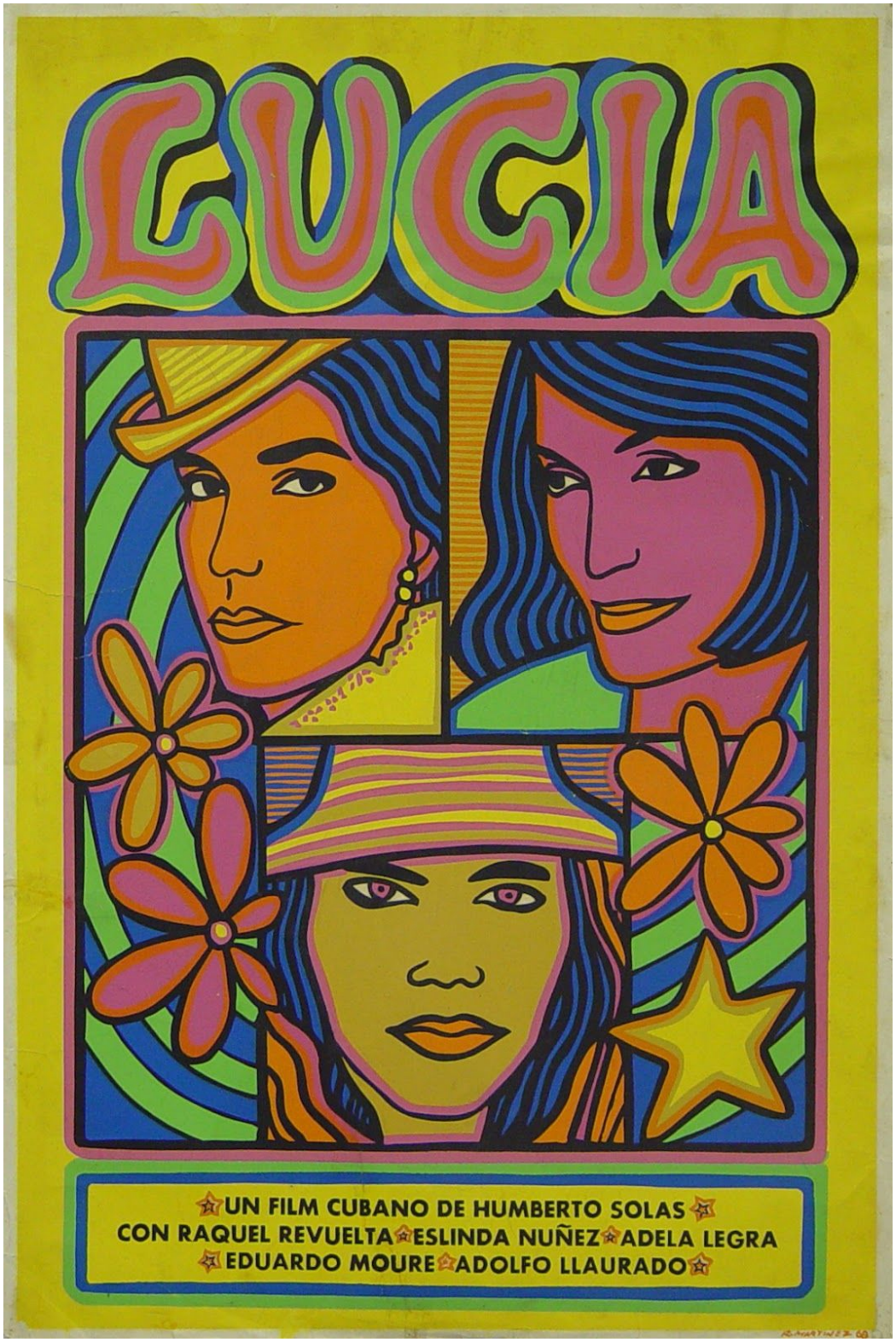

Fig. 7. Raúl Martínez, ICAIC. *Lucía* (1968) Silkscreen print; 76.2 cm x 50.9 cm. José Martí National Library. Havana, Cuba.

Fig. 8. Heriberto Echeverría del Pozo, COR. *Marzo 8... Día Internacional de la Mujer* [March 8… International Women's Day](1971). Offset print; 76 x 36 cm. José Martí National Library. Havana, Cuba.

Fig. 9. Raimundo Alfonso, COR (Matanzas). *Para lograr la plena emancipación de la mujer es preciso que la mujer participe en el trabajo. 8 de marzo Día Internacional de la Mujer* [To achieve women's full emancipation it is necessary that women participate in the workforce](1970). Offset print; 66 x 35 cm. José Martí National Library. Havana, Cuba.

Fig. 10. Heriberto Echeverría del Pozo, FMC. *Tabaco / Hay un trabajo que tú puedes hacer / Incorporate / FMC* [Tobacco / There is a job you can do / Join] (1972) Offset print; 70.8 x 50.5 cm. José Martí National Library. Havana, Cuba.

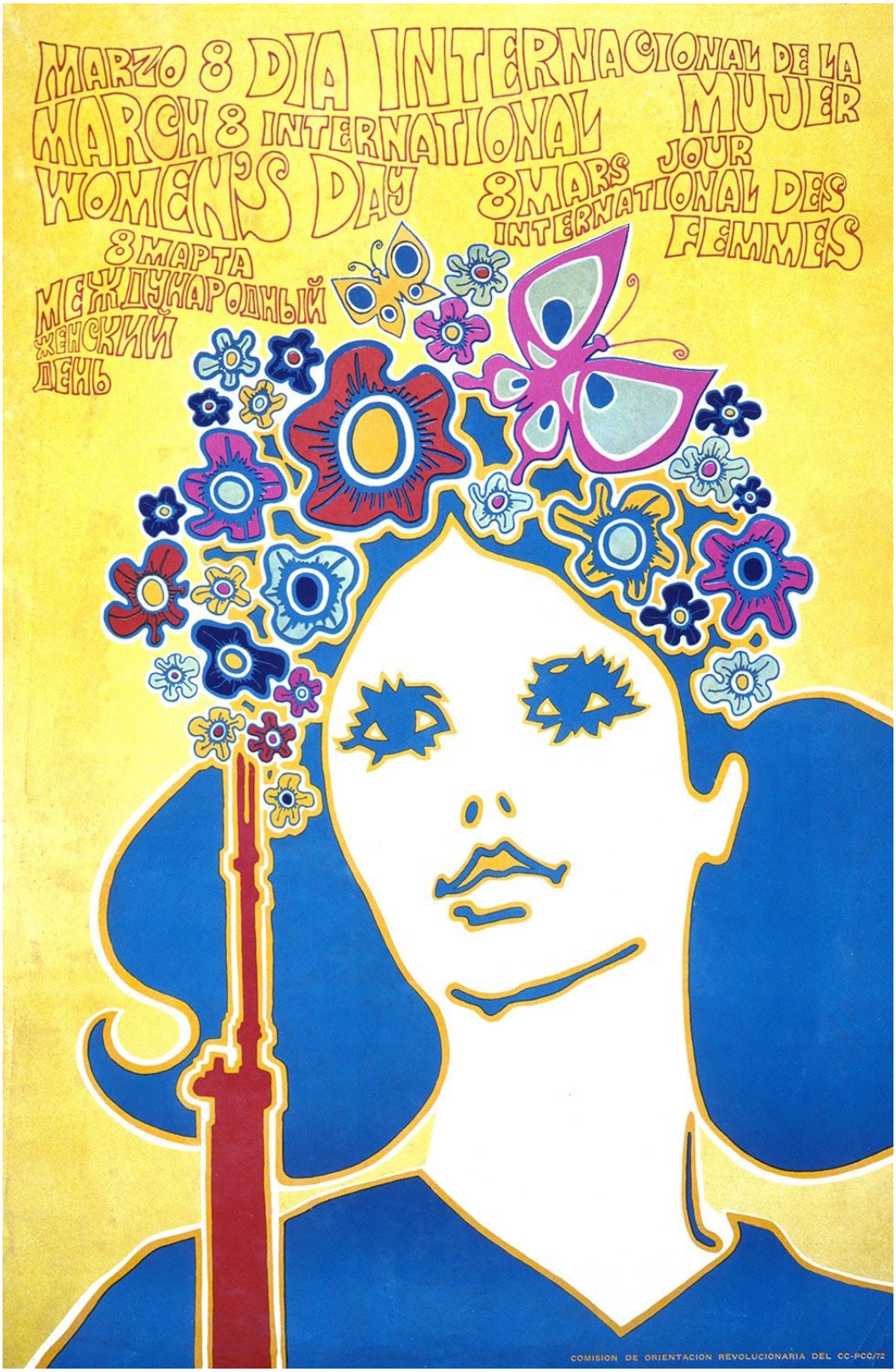

Fig. 11. Heriberto Echeverría del Pozo, COR. *Marzo 8 Día Internacional de la Mujer* [March 8 International Women's Day] (1972). Offset print; 64x42 cm. Image courtesy of Lincoln Cushing.

Fig. 12. Artist and agency unknown. Unknown. *Nuestra solidaridad combatiente con todas las mujeres del mundo* [Our Combative Solidarity with all Women in the World](c. 1970s). Silkscreen print; 71.8 x 47.3 cm. José Martí National Library. Havana, Cuba.

Fig. 13. Artists unknown, FMC. *Logos of the Federación de Mujeres Cubanas* (left: 1960-67, middle: 1967-2009, right: 2009-present). Digital images, dimensions variable. Courtesy of *Bohemia* and *Mujeres* magazines.

Fig. 14. Artist unknown. *Profundizando la acción revolucionaria de la mujer* [Deepening Women's Revolutionary Action] (1974). Offset print; 76.2 x 50.8 cm. José Martí National Library. Havana, Cuba.

Fig. 15. Francisco Lojos Díaz. *Federada: estudia y serás parte activa del futuro* [FMC Federate, Study and You Will Be an Active Part of the Future] (c. 1970s). Offset print; 54.9 x 39.1 cm. José Martí National Library. Havana, Cuba.

Fig. 16 . Enlarged view of contemporary FMC logo (2009–present).

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