Artelogie

Recherche sur les arts, le patrimoine et la littérature de l'Amérique latine

17 | 2021

Transformaciones en Cuba contemporánea: cultura y sociedad

A Collective Roar from the Taller de Gráfica Popular: Mariana Yampolsky, Elizabeth Catlett, Fanny Rabel and Celia Calderón

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Edición electrónica

URL: <https://journals.openedition.org/artelogie/10348>

DOI: 10.4000/artelogie.10348

ISSN: 2115-6395

Editor

Association ESCAL

Referencia electrónica

Dina Comisarenko Mirkin, «A Collective Roar from the Taller de Gráfica Popular: Mariana Yampolsky, Elizabeth Catlett, Fanny Rabel and Celia Calderón», *Artelogie* [En línea], 17 | 2021, Publicado el 27 septiembre 2021, consultado el 15 septiembre 2022. URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/artelogie/10348> ; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4000/artelogie.10348>

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A Collective Roar from the Taller de Gráfica Popular: Mariana Yampolsky, Elizabeth Catlett, Fanny Rabel and Celia Calderón

Dina Comisarenco Mirkin

*"The Female Gaze inspires a collective roar,
we fill with power as we corroborate one another and
collaborate,
blatantly ask the obvious questions about the divided
feminine,
call out from our muted and blindfolded objectized
humanity.
We take our blindfolds off and say what we see. "
Joey Soloway¹*

Introduction

- ¹ Although the production of the members of the Taller de Gráfica Popular (TGP) as a predominantly male group has been studied abundantly,² the work of the group's female engravers, whose feminine gazes have defied the traditional imaginary relating to social roles commonly associated to women, haven't received the recognition it deserves.
- ² Consequently, in this text I aim to begin a study of the graphic work produced by some of the pioneer artists of the TGP, from the 1940s to the 1960s, Mariana Yampolsky, Elizabeth Catlett, Fanny Rabel and Celia Calderón, with the goal of understanding how, beyond the ideology and stylistic features that they shared with their male counterparts, they managed to articulate an iconography that's unique, distinctive and

worthy of knowing and studying, thanks to their individual and collective experiences as female artists in Mexico.³

- 3 Inspired by English film theorist Laura Mulvey's (1941) concept of the "male gaze,"⁴ which she used to speak of the heterosexual male's objectifying looks of women, I start from the concept of her metaphorical antonym, the "female gaze," which, according to the American writer-director Joey (previously Jill) Soloway (1965) is defined as a perspective that emphasizes emotions and empathy as related to the real feelings and experiences of women.

The Taller de Gráfica Popular

- 4 Although the TGP (founded in 1937) continues to operate to this day, its production was particularly relevant during its early years, which coincided with the end of President Lázaro Cárdenas's term (1934-1940), when the oil expropriation was decreed. It was a time in which exiled intellectuals and artists arrived to Mexico escaping Spanish and German fascism, and life in was characterized by an intense and polarized political and union activity that also invited artistic-political action.
- 5 The TGP's founding members— Leopoldo Méndez (1902-1969), Pablo O'Higgins (1904-1983) and Luis Arenal (1908-1985)—decided to use the graphic medium's enormous potential (due to both its low cost of production and its ease of big-scale reproduction) to reach a large audience. The members of the Taller put their art at the service of the struggle for social justice, denouncing the unfair treatment of campesinos and workers, and they satirized the abuses and excesses of the bourgeoisie with the object of creating a conscience and contribute to social change.
- 6 Although the fight for women's rights, particularly the right to vote, was one of the important axes of the time's social struggle, the Taller as a group didn't manifest itself about it, since, as we will see, the feminine imaginary represented in the majority of works produced by the group's male artists was kept within the limits of what was considered appropriate for women according to the era's gender stereotypes.

The Feminine Imaginary In the TGP

- 7 Within the thematic repertoire of the TGP, male artists have for the most part coincided in their selections of scenes and themes with regards to the representation of women. In their oeuvre, although it must be mentioned that they avoided the male gaze that commonly objectifies the female body (a gaze that was common in some of the works of the muralist movement of that era), the male members of the TGP, however, reinforced other forms of patriarchal oppression, especially some of the forms of the so-called "captivities" of women, as they were called by the feminist anthropologist Marcela Lagarde (1948), which were disguised as positive social paradigms, such as loyalty, surrender, selflessness and maternity, presented as absolute limits that dramatically exclude women from the possibility of developing other values and activities, and subjugated them because of that.
- 8 Frequently in the TGP's iconography, women were represented as allegorical forms to express mythical or abstract ideas, such as the nation or Mother Earth, that have little to do with the real lives of women, or with their affections, feelings or interests, and

that only serve to reinforce the patriarchal mandate of socially imposed ideals, generally foreign to the subjective experiences of women.

- 9 In other images of the TGP, women were commonly represented as dedicated mostly and almost exclusively to the reproduction and breeding of children, including the socialization of gender roles that have traditionally perpetuated the patriarchal model, that women seem to be wanting to perpetuate without any type of criticism or resistance, thus normalizing even more the traditional gender stereotypes.
- 10 The act of teaching, understood as a natural extension of maternity, was also commonly represented in the Taller. Therefore, teachers, especially those in rural areas, were portrayed by the engravers of the TGP, highlighting the teaching of civic values that they were expected to promulgate, as well as the fragility, solitude and alienation that were commonly associated with the feminine in an essentialist and acritical fashion.
- 11 Finally, it's also common to find prints in which women appear related to suffering, as if pain were a substantially feminine way to approach life, which, from the perspective of the Taller, is always aggravated by poverty and the social injustices of the capitalist system, as well as for the supposedly natural eagerness of women to sacrifice ourselves for others, even at the expense of our own happiness and our own lives.
- 12 As we will see, most of these feminine stereotypes found in the male production of the TGP were bravely challenged by the iconography of the group's female engravers who, from their feminine gazes, recovered the personal world of women, re-signifying it in all its complexity and depth.

Mariana Yampolsky Urbach

Fig. 1 Mariana Yampolsky, *Madre y niño*, 1946

- 13 On her father's side, Yampolsky came from a Russian-Jewish family that had to flee their home country, escaping the tsarist pogroms, while her mother came from a German-Jewish family, also forced to emigrate, although a few years later than the Yampolskys, due to Nazism. Born in the USA, Mariana's father was a painter and sculptor who met Mariana's mother in a study trip he took to Berlin. Through her mother's side, Mariana was the niece of famous anthropologist Franz Boas,⁵ recognized, scientifically, for his brilliant development of the concept of difference and cultural relativism, and, politically, for his active opposition to fascism.
- 14 Mariana's commitment to social causes, her fight against totalitarianisms, as well as her skill and bravery to break with gender stereotypes, in her work as in her life, have their origins in part in her family history, in the forced uprooting suffered by her parents' and grandparents' generations, as well as in her profoundly humanist convictions, which, as with so many other socialist intellectuals of the time, managed to hold them spiritually and thus survive through time.
- 15 Before her arrival to Mexico at the age of 19, Mariana had studied literature and arts at the University of (her native) Chicago. Mariana had heard of the TGP in New York, in a conference that was probably given by artists Max Kahn (1902–2005) and Eleanor Coen (1916–2010), who had attended a summer course offered by the Taller and who did a good job transmitting their enthusiasm for the group's original artistic-political initiative, to the point that young Mariana decided to travel to Mexico to join the TGP.
- 16 In a beautiful piece about her friend Mariana, the renowned author and journalist Elena Poniatowska (1932) describes the surprise upon learning that the young artist, who didn't know Spanish and didn't have a trajectory as a professional artist, was accepted almost immediately to the Taller⁶ as the group's first permanent female member.⁷ Mariana earned this honorable and unexpected position probably thanks to her youth and courage, her genuine interest and enthusiasm for participation, and her foreign nationality, all of which gave her certain privileges regarding the country's gender stereotypes.
- 17 If, as it's been mentioned, maternity was a characteristic theme for many members of the Taller, observing the works Yampolsky created during her stint at the TGP we can see that her prints don't align themselves with the Taller's traditional iconography. So, for example, her work *Madre y niño* (1946) (fig.1), instead of locating itself in suffering and solitude (where many of Yampolsky's colleagues situated that theme), the artist instead expressed the affective and intellectual lives of her model mother and son, capturing the intimacy and tenderness of their relation from a place of intimacy and empathy.
- 18 In *La madre de Juárez* (1956), Yampolsky, instead of presenting the subject of maternity in an anonymous fashion, or representing the hero as an adult, as was common for her masculine colleagues of the Taller, identified the indigenous maternal figure of Zapotec origin with her baby in her arms as the responsible for the procreation and breeding of the future national hero. At the same time, by not individualizing the image with too many iconographic details, but instead only using the piece's title, the artist expresses in a very potent and convincing way that as women we are all potential mothers of future national heroes.
- 19 At other times, Yampolsky's women are alone and working, as happens with several images created by her male counterparts, but in Yampolsky's case the artist elects to

represent a moment of rest and reflection, thus alluding to the existence of woman's inner world, something that usually doesn't show up in the Taller's most representative's works, which instead highlight work and sacrifice. *Lavandera* (n.d.), for example, portrays a woman who, busy with housekeeping, takes a breath and shrugs her shoulders, seemingly sighing as her eyes drift away from her chores. The blank space on the left side of the composition, contrasting strongly with the many textures of the woman's face and body, as well as with the sink in which she washes, confers a sense of existential anguish that accompanies the woman's posture. The woman seems to be debating, albeit for a moment, between her role in doing the chores and the social isolation that often goes with said demanding activities.

- 20 According to the expert Francisco Reyes Palmas, Yampolsky's pieces during this first stage are characterized by "a predominance of scenes related to community life, to work and to the historical aspects, far from the exalted denunciation of pathos of misery"⁸ that were characteristic in the group. The author adds that Yampolsky's "vision of the cultural richness made her concentrate on the strength of the community regarding the subtle and refined, elements that she will maintain during her phase as a photographer."⁹
- 21 In this context I would like to delve into this concept, adding that this sense of community so typical of Yampolsky's work is also characterized, very originally, for expressing the harmony that can exist between men and women, as well as with women amongst themselves. This is easy to observe in some of Yampolsky's collective works, such as *Ganaremos la paz si luchamos por ella* (1947), created in collaboration with Arturo García Bustos, as in others of her sole authorship, such as *Vivac de revolucionarios* (1947), one of her prints included in the album *Estampas de la Revolución*, and which deals with the night camp of revolutionary soldiers. According to the book's references of the images, the work represents the resurgence of the Mexican song, when during the Mexican Revolution, between battles, men and women would get together to rest and sing together. One of the most outstanding aspects of this early Yampolsky image is the ambiance of camaraderie and harmony that can exist between the sexes, something that the artist could express in a very natural and convincing way.
- 22 Also in *Istmo de Tehuantepec: desgranando maíz* (1948), the image stands out not only for the expression of strength that Yampolsky (as did many other artists) recognized in the Istmeña women, but also for their harmonious relationship with men, as can be observed in the figures in the foreground, as well as with women, as can be seen in the background. Other examples of Yampolsky's work that speak of harmony between the genders are: *La juventud de Emiliano Zapata* (1947), where the artist included a campesino couple formed by a man and a woman that equally share the grueling labor of carrying the harvest; and *Sentados en el jardín* (1956), where a couple, male and female, share a moment of rest and camaraderie as they enjoy the nature that surrounds them.
- 23 In *Campaña Nacional contra el analfabetismo* (n.d.), men, women and children again participate equally and with the same rights in the labors of teaching and learning with enthusiasm and social responsibility. In this last case, it's interesting to point out that the theme of education will continue appearing in Yampolsky's photographic work. An example of this is *Escuela mazahua* (1984), although in that photograph it's girls of all ages and the female teacher who share the love of knowledge.
- 24 Mariana would say that "spending time in the Taller de Gráfica Popular [with all its members] was the most important professional experience" of her life.¹⁰ She added that

her entry into the Taller had defined her life, as it was “a cooperative of painters and graphic artists authentically interested in the social and political struggles of campesinos and workers. They really put their talent at the service of the less fortunate and were committed to them.”¹¹ The conviction regarding gender equality and women’s intellectual capacity that Yampolsky was able to express in her prints was, without a doubt, one of the main motors that powered her to develop her artistic career, which, in her case, would later venture into photography.

Elizabeth Catlett

Fig. 2 Elizabeth Catlett, *I am the Negro Woman*, 1946

- 25 Elizabeth Catlett was born in Washington D.C., and, as was the case with many African-Americans of the time, three of Catlett’s grandparents had arrived to America after being kidnapped from their country to be enslaved.¹² Her father, a math teacher, died shortly after the birth of Elizabeth, and the artist was raised by her mother, Marty Catlett, also a teacher, as well as a social worker, and by her maternal grandparents, from whom she learned about the injustices and atrocities of slavery, but also about human dignity and the ability for self-improvement, even in the most adverse of circumstances.
- 26 In 1932, Catlett applied to the Carnegie Institute of Technology. Even though she made a very good impression on the admissions committee, she was rejected due to her race.¹³ Then, in 1936, Catlett graduated as a Bachelor of Science in Art with a specialization in painting from Howard University. Catlett then worked for two years as a public school teacher in Durham, North Carolina. In 1940, she went to graduate school at the University of Iowa, where she took classes with the famous American artist Grant Wood (1891-1942). Between 1940 and 1942, Catlett was the director of the Art Department at

Dillard University, where she also taught drawing, painting, printmaking and art history. During the summer of 1941 she worked and studied at Chicago's Southside Community Center. There, she came into contact with artists from the important movement known as the Black Renaissance, with whom she shared Marxist and socialist ideas, as well as the conviction that it was important to create realist art for the people.

- 27 Later on, in 1942, Catlett and Charles White (1918-1979) travelled to New York, where they met some of the most outstanding African-American visual artists of that time, such as Jacob Lawrence (1917-2000) and Norman Wilfred Lewis (1909-1979), as well as writers such as Gwendolyn Bennett (1902-1981). In New York, Catlett took classes at the Art Student's League and worked for the famous Franco-Russian sculptor Ossip Zadkine (1888-1967). Between 1944 and 1946, Catlett taught at the George Washington Carver School, a community school for workers from Harlem where artistic teachings were combined with a deepening of political consciousness. From all the student-workers who were enrolled in the school (but particularly from the women), whom Catlett taught everything from sculpture to sewing, the artist learned a lot about the experiences of the poorest African-Americans, especially about the dramatic impact that such poverty has on people's lives.
- 28 In 1946, Catlett got a grant from the Julius Rosenwald Fund. She started work on a series inspired on the women workers of the Carver School that she'd later finish in Mexico, while working at the TGP. The series *Negro Woman* (also known as *The Black Woman*) (1946), composed of 15 linoleum prints, is a commemoration of the oppression, resistance and survival of African-American women, and constitutes one of the TGP's most outstanding political and esthetic contributions.¹⁴ The series' order was collated by the artist herself, who, through the works, as well as the texts on the bottom, narrates graphically and textually the life of African-American women of the United States. In this manner, the works are weaved together, completing some of the ideas expressed in the previous ones.
- 29 Thus, for example, after the first image, significantly titled "I am the Negro Woman," (fig. 2) parting from Cattlet's situation as an African-American woman, which is the genesis for the series, there comes a second piece, titled "I have always worked hard in America," representing three women doing housework. Then Cattlet continues the specification of said housework in other areas through the two next pieces which declare that women have also worked hard in the fields ("In the fields") and as maids ("In other folks's homes.")
- 30 After this introduction about the work of African-American women, Cattlet continues with another series dedicated to some of the most important women in the human rights struggle against slavery. The group begins with the declaration "I have given the world my songs," which represents a woman playing the guitar, while in the background there is a burning cross and a white man attacking a black man. It continues with the portraits of the women's rights activist Sojourner Truth (1797-1883); the political activist Harriet Tubman (1822-1913); and, finally, the first published female African American poet, Phillis Wheatley (1753-1784). The equating of political and artistic legacy, the act of introducing them all with the metaphor of the songs given to the world, results extraordinarily poetic and evocative.
- 31 The series continues with two other images in which the important role of African-American women in political organization and education are specified: in "My role has

been important in the struggle to organize the unorganized,” in which women speak to workers, and in “I have studied in ever increasing numbers,” in which they participate in literacy campaigns with other women.

- 32 The following three pieces denounce, with irony, the ongoing injustices in the United States: “My reward has been bars between me and the rest of the land,” “I have special reservations,” “Special Houses,” and “and a special fear for my loved ones,” where the artist references the terrible discrimination and the violence of the anti-African-American policies of segregation.
- 33 The series concludes with a hopeful image: “My right is a future of equality with other Americans,” a beautiful portrait of an African-American woman who, with her gaze on high, summarizes the just aspirations of a dignified life in which there will finally be no place for the atrocities denounced in the previous images.
- 34 Through the various images of the portfolio, organized as if they were chapters of a book, Catlett not only denounces oppression due to gender, but also due to race and social conditions. At the same time, she references the dramatic history of slavery in the United States, underscoring the role of some of the brave women who, with their work and lives, offered important examples of fight and resistance in search of liberty. With her series and with other pieces and projects, like when she invited her Taller colleagues to participate with illustrations for a *Freedom* magazine article on “The History of negros in North America,” Catlett introduced the theme of Blackness to the TGP production, a theme that, despite the African roots of the Mexican population and the conditions of oppression of the Afro-Mexican community, hadn’t been denounced in the association.
- 35 Catlett continued active in the Taller until 1966. She made numerous contributions through her graphic production and, afterwards, although she continued said labor, she dedicated herself mostly to writing, medium for which she is currently most known.

Fanny Rabel

Fig. 3 Fanny Rabel, *Primeras miradas*, 1959

- 36 Fanny Rabinovich Duval (1922-2008), known as Fanny Rabel, was born in the Polish city of Lublin. Her family, the Kompaneyets/Rabinovichs, made up a great theater company that acted a varied repertoire of Yiddish classic theater. During the Interwar Period, the company travelled from town to town, reaching Jewish communities in Poland and Russia.
- 37 In 1928, Rabel's family settled in Paris, where the artist attended her primary education. However, some years later, escaping Nazism and World War II, the Rabels emigrated to Mexico.
- 38 In Mexico, Rabel continued her studies at the Centro Escolar Revolución. In order to attend to her artistic inclinations, in 1939 she enrolled in drawing and printmaking classes at the Escuela Nocturna de Arte for workers. A bit later she joined David Alfaro Siqueiros's (1896-1974) team, specifically at the Sindicato Mexicano de Electricistas (1939-1940). In 1940, she enrolled in San Carlos and later in the Escuela Nacional de Pintura y Escultura La Esmeralda, which was recently established. It was at the Escuela Nacional where she met Frida Kahlo and became part of the group known as "Los Fridos," along with Guillermo Monroy, Arturo Estrada and Arturo García Bustos. As her teacher rightly pointed out, Rabel, despite her youth, brought with her all the painful experiences suffered by her people throughout history.
- 39 Between 1945 and 1948, at the Artes del Libro school, Rabel studied printmaking, a technique she perfected and used to produce abundant work, that ever since then always occupied an important part in her vast artistic production. Using different creative strategies and varied expressive mediums, of which the graphic work played a central role, Rabel proposed to democratize the artistic practice, making, in her own

words, “an art that is that is accessible and understandable for the people” that would result in an effective “weapon” for the revolutionary struggle and to build a better society.

- 40 Some of Rabel’s graphic works created during the 1950’s result paradigmatic of her always original and positive definition of feminine subjectivity. This, despite the social context in which they were created, which wasn’t particularly inviting to such creations.¹⁵
- 41 First, we must note that if Rabel did produce portraits of her relatives and loved ones, such as Frida, in line with the TGP’s objectives and with her own conviction regarding art’s populist role, the artist also created many portraits of poor women, covering a wide spectrum comprising girls as well as adult and elderly women, in which she was always focused on capturing the unique expression and personality of each of her models. Even though back then the TGP discussed the urgency of setting their human subjects in a specific context, Rabel was able to maintain her stylistic independence by producing true portraits in the most exact sense of that artistic genre, which reveal, through the models’ expressions, more about their living conditions than could’ve been revealed by contextual objects or landscapes.
- 42 On the other hand, just as many of her male TGP colleagues, Rabel utilized feminine figures as allegories of Earth, the indigenous race, or the spirit of resistance against violence. However, in all of them, and despite the invisibility of the faces, through her representations of extraordinarily powerful body, constructed with simple geometric figures and expressive shades of gray, Rabel was able to humanize the symbols, blurring the allegoric genre’s abstraction to transform them vigorous arguments of human and philosophical natures. In effect, many of them give the impression of having been originated as figure studies, inspired from real flesh and bone models, that later on, attending to unique expressive characteristics, became allegories of abstract concepts.
- 43 Rabel also personifies the pain caused by natural catastrophes, such as a drought, and human catastrophes, especially the ones derived from social violence, be it a revolution or a civil war, forced migration or imprisonment. She does so through feminine figures that, once again, through their dramatic expressions and/or physical gestures, seem to summarize all the pain that human beings are capable of surviving. All these images constitute strong denouncements of the impact these human and natural violences have over people’s lives. They stand in moving anti-memories of the official representations that commonly glorify war and omit their atrocious social effects on civil society.
- 44 Boys and girls aren’t foreign to the atrocious reality of violence either. Rabel includes their portraits as personifications of pain caused by physical and spiritual injuries, by the accelerated growth brought upon young girls that act as mothers of their sons or younger siblings, as well as by the state of abandonment that fogs childhood in times of terror and extreme injustice.
- 45 Another set of images, specifically the lithography titled *Primeras miradas* (fig.3), again makes use of a traditional theme, in this case maternity. However, in this image Rabel doesn’t use it to personify the pain or selflessness characteristic of this theme in the iconography of the Mexican School and her various colleagues of the TGP. Instead, she represents the image of a strong mother with a slight smile lovingly holding a baby

who, as the title of the piece makes explicit, begins, over her mother's shoulder, to learn, to peek, to take a gander and enjoy the world.

- 46 Feminine work in the lowest classes is not looked over by Rabel's sharp gaze. In her prints she captured tamale or taco vendors, among many other occupations in which women of many age groups participated completely independently from the development of the women's rights movement, due to an overwhelming basic economic necessity, a lot of the times confronting extreme situations such as the need to feed their children.
- 47 This is how, based on her own experience as a female artist, of her sharp power of observation in regards to day-to-day life, as well as her conviction to put her art at the service of the poorest classes, Rabel created a very personal feminine iconography in which, effectively, as was once pointed out by Leopoldo Méndez, tenderness can be a revolutionary weapon.

48

Celia Calderón

Fig. 4 Celia Calderón, *Cinco muchachas*, undated

- 49 Celia Calderón was born in 1921, along with the muralist movement. Although little is known of the artist's early years, we know that between 1942 and 1944, in the midst of World War II (1939-1945), young Calderón studied at the Escuela Nacional de Artes Plásticas (ENAP), where she took classes with distinguished professors such as Julio Castellanos (1905-1947).¹
- 50 After winning a drawing contest, Calderón was offered a scholarship from the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México to continue her formation at the Escuela de

Artes del Libro. Along with Francisco Díaz de León (1897-1975), Calderón took printmaking classes, a medium in which she would eventually excel.

- 51 Along with some of her colleagues, the artist founded the Sociedad para el Impulso de las Artes Plásticas. Then, in 1947 she was invited to join the Sociedad Mexicana de Grabadores (SMG), an organization that contributed enormously to the valorization of printmaking in Mexican art, as it had the participation of important figures. Calderón was also, from 1949, a founding member of the Salón de la Plástica Mexicana, an outstanding instance in Mexican art that would award her the Premio de Invierno in 1955.
- 52 Some years prior, in 1950, Calderón had obtained a scholarship to study in London's Slade School of Fine Arts, financed by the INBAL and the British Institute. In that time, Calderón was in charge of the Taller's exhibits, a job she retained until 1959. Then, between 1963 and 1965, the artist was the collective's director.
- 53 Even within the Taller's collective works, Calderón manifested for the most part a marked interest for women's portraits, be it anonymous or historical figures. Thus, for example, when in 1955 Elizabeth Catlett invited her Taller cohorts to provide illustrations for an article about the "History of Negroes in North America," to which we referred to above, she opted for portraying Ida B. Wells-Barnett (1862-1931), the journalist, teacher and early leader of the rights of African-Americans who dedicated her life to fight against prejudice and violence, as well as for the equality of African-Americans, especially women.
- 54 Taking into consideration the general context of women's organizations of that era, mainly of the Unión Nacional de Mujeres Mexicanas, the feminine branch of the Partido Comunista, with whom some artists were connected, the themes of the female TGP printmakers often coincided with their revindications of maternity, childhood happiness, and a defense of youth, maintaining a pattern of domesticity that was supposed to correspond to the feminine sphere.
- 55 Consequently with these interests, Calderón made numerous maternities. The earliest ones were done with very sculptural forms, à la her teacher Castellanos, portraying indigenous women as was characteristic of the Taller, sometimes emphasizing their poverty and vulnerability, as well as their sacrifice and pain due to overseeing their families' care. Calderón used other opportunities to emphasize maternal happiness, sometimes even, throughout the titles and the formal treatment of her pieces, imbuing them with the sacredness of Christian iconography. The artist even created psychological portraits not only of one mother, but the feeling of worry, personal realization or contemporary problems such as the premature maternity of so many women or the role of mothers that many girls must play due to the harsh life conditions of their own mothers.
- 56 In Calderón's overall work, it's striking that instead of emphasizing women's conditions of subordination and marginalization, many of her pieces highlight not only the role of women in normally ignored areas such as education or reading, but what is represented is the camaraderie and sorority among women that occurs in the workplace (fig. 4). Calderón's work also highlighted many other situations that unites women intergenerationally, like the birth of a baby, as well as the cathartic dialogue that rises naturally in an intimate moment of rest and confidence when women cry and laugh together, or the moment of gossip, like in her drawing titled "comadreando," a term used commonly to refer to the supposed penchant women have for talking

excessively, for murmuring and for gossiping. But more than the prejudices of said characterization, behind it all is a reference to the solidarity, complicity and fellowship of women.

- 57 Calderón, by concentrating in the representation of activities carried out daily by women that are interpreted from their own closeness to the fight for women's rights as well as from Calderón's own experience as a woman in an eminently patriarchal society, avoided falling into the trap of the rigid definitions of the feminine gender's identities. Thus, instead of reiterating feminine solitude, such as happens in so much Mexican art of the 20th century, she set out, on the contrary, to dismantle the macho myth that claims there is no friendship between women.

Final Thoughts

- 58 The constant omissions of the female engravers' work in great part of the TGP's specialized literature not only communicates the erroneous idea that women haven't participated in the artist collective's development, but it also deprives us of images that tell a story, distinct from the official one, in which we can confirm that women have an intellectual life, that we have played transcendental cultural and social roles, and that we have been capable of relating amongst us and with men in an solidary and equitable fashion.
- 59 Upon approaching the work of the pioneer female engravers of the TGP, it becomes clear that all of them concentrated in those themes they felt closer to them, such as the representation of activities usually done by women. This theme, which, as we have seen, wasn't foreign to the male engravers, was however approached by the women engravers from their situated knowledge and allowed them to overcome their male counterparts' rigid gender definitions to express gender equality (Yampolsky), to denounce violences against African-American women and exalt some of the figures who fought against slavery (Catlett), to express the life of female workers with empathy and sensibility (Rabel), and to confirm the importance of feminine solidarity (Calderón).
- 60 The TGP's female artists developed an oeuvre of social criticism and of an affirmation of women's political, cultural and economic roles that transcended the association's ideological and aesthetic dogmas. It succeeded in overcoming the gender stereotypes promulgated by the group's men as well as by that era's national art scene. With honesty, coherence and congruity, Yampolsky, Catlett, Rabel and Calderón identified and explained some of women's actual emotions and experiences, for with their feminine gazes in all their diversity, they open our eyes to begin reflecting on ourselves as women, to remove the bandages from our eyes and to finally say what we see, to join the collective roar that is finally making a loud and determined noise.

NOTAS

1. Most of the artist's biographical information was taken from Raquel Tibol's text "Celia Calderón," *op. cit.* and from Adès, Dawn, and Alison McClean's, *Revolution on Paper*, *op. cit.* which I complemented with various readings on the institutions in which she studied or joined.
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NOTAS FINALES

1. Joey Solloway, opening speech at the 2016 Toronto Film Festival.
 2. Among the books specialized on the TGP we must mention Prignitz-Poda, Helga's *El Taller de Gráfica Popular*, CDMX, Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes, 1992; Musacchio, Humberto's, *El Taller de Gráfica Popular*, CDMX, Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2007; and, among the most recent ones, another one by Prignitz-Poda, Helga, *Estampa y lucha. El Taller de Gráfica Popular 1937-2017*, CDMX, INBA; Caplow, Deborah's *El Taller de Gráfica Popular. Vida y arte*, Athens, Georgia Museum of Art, 2016; and Museo Nacional de la Estampa, 2018.
 3. All these women's condition as foreigners was possibly a considerable factor that facilitated their professional development in and out of the Taller. At the same time, Mariana and Fanny's Jewishness, as well as Elizabeth's Blackness, turned them into natural candidates to join the Taller's work, which was characterized by its forceful opposition to fascism, as well as to ethnic and racial discrimination.
 4. Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," *Screen*, Autumn, 1975, 16, 3, pp. 6-18.
 5. As a professor in Columbia University, Boas had visited Mexico in 1911. There, he founded, along with Ezequiel Chávez and Eduard Seller, the Escuela Internacional de Arqueología y Etnologías Americanas. .
 6. Elena Poniatowska, *Mariana Yampolsky y la bugamvillia*, CDMX, Plaza y Janés, 2001, p. 24.
 7. Among the Mexican female artists that participated in the TGP during the 1940's we must mention Helena Huerta Múzquiz (1908-1997), who 1939 joined as an invited artist and, between 1948 and 1957, participated as a member artist. Isabel Villaseñor (1909-1953) must also be mentioned, a guest artist throughout the 1940's.
 8. Francisco Reyes Palma, "Mariana Yampolsky. Antropología emocional," in *Mariana Yampolsky Imagen Memoria*, Elizabeth Ferrer, Elena Poniatowska, and Francisco Reyes Palma, CDMX, CONACULTA, 1999, p. 18.
 9. *Ibid.*
 10. Mariana Yampolsky, in *Mariana Yampolsky y la bugamvillia*, *op. cit.*, p. 39.
 11. *Ibid.*, p. 40.
 12. The large part of this section's biographical facts, such as that regarding the artist's life in Mexico, were taken from Melanie Ann Herzog's *Elizabeth Catlett. An American Artist in Mexico*, Seattle and London, University of Washington Press, 2000; from the artist's official website, <https://www.elizabethcatlettart.com/bio> (consulted several times in 2019 and 2020); and Samella
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Lewis's *The Art of Elizabeth Catlett*, Los Angeles, Hancraft Studios, 1984. The chapter "The Early Years, 1915-1946," from the previously cited Herzog book deals with that stage of the artist's life, pp. 13-47.

13. "The Education of Sculptress Elizabeth Catlett." *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, no. 25 (1999): 77.

14. I've previously studied the series more in depth in two of my previous articles: "'Negro Woman' y la postmemoria de la esclavitud en Elizabeth Catlett," *La Ventana*, no. 54, July-December 2021, and "'Mi arte habla por mis dos pueblos:' la gráfica de Elizabeth Catlett en el Taller de Gráfica Popular (1946-1966)," *Americanía. Revista de estudios Latinoamericanos*, June 2021.

15. I've previously studied Rabel's graphic oeuvre in "Grafiki Fanny Rabel ARTYSTKI W WIEKU POMIĘDZY SZEŚCSETNYM I DWUTYSIĘCZNYM ROKIEM ŻYCIA)" / Graphic Works by Fanny Rabel (Artist Between 600 and 2000 Years of Age" en *Frida Kahlo and Diego Rivera Polski kontekst*, exhibition catalogue curated by Helga Prignitz-Poda, CZAMEK Culture Centre, Poland, September 2017-January 2018, pp. 211-223, and in "La ternura revolucionaria: las mujeres en la obra gráfica de Fanny Rabel," MAV Mujeres en las artes visuales, published online.

RESÚMENES

Este artículo se centra en la producción gráfica de cuatro grabadoras: Mariana Yampolsky, Elizabeth Catlett, Fanny Rabel y Celia Calderón. A partir de la década de los 40 y hasta los años 60, formaron parte del colectivo de artistas políticos llamado *Taller de Gráfica Popular* de México. Allí, produjeron obras con características estilísticas e iconográficas muy originales, principalmente en lo que respecta a la representación femenina, mostrando sus propias vidas de mujeres, en relación tanto con sus experiencias individuales como compartidas. El estudio nos permite, acercarnos a la historia de la mujer desde una perspectiva no oficial, pero también reconocer en particular, algunas de las contribuciones fundamentales que dichas artistas hicieron al *Taller de Gráfica Popular*, así como al arte mexicano en general..

This paper focuses on the graphic production of four engravers: Mariana Yampolsky, Elizabeth Catlett, Fanny Rabel and Celia Calderón. From the 1940s and throughout the 1960s, while they were part of the political artist collective *Taller de Gráfica Popular*, all of them produced works with very original stylistic and iconographic characteristics, mainly regarding the representation of women, which denotes their own situated knowledge as women in relation both to their individual and shared experiences. Their study allows us not only to approach women's history from an unofficial perspective, but also to recognize some of the fundamental contributions the artists made to the *Taller de Gráfica Popular* in particular, as well as to Mexican art in general.

ÍNDICE

Keywords: Mariana Yampolsky, Elizabeth Catlett, Fanny Rabel, Celia Calderón, Taller de Gráfica Popular

Palabras claves: Mariana Yampolsky, Elizabeth Catlett, Fanny Rabel, Celia Calderón, Taller de Gráfica Popular

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