Taller Boricua

“The Young Lords' demands for justice in the late 1960s sparked the REBEL IMAGINATION of Puerto Ricans.  Artists created new cultural works and institutions that embraced our African and Taino culture and denounced our oppression in the United States and Puerto Rico.  A new language was born.  In that historic moment, art was resistance, and resistance was art.“

IRIS MORALES, attorney, educator, filmmaker and former Deputy of Education for the Young Lords Party.

Still in operation today, Taller Boricua/The Puerto Rican Workshop,Inc., was founded in fall 1970 by young activists who formed The Puerto Rican Art Workers Coalition: Marcos Dimas, Adrian Garcia, Martin Rubio, Armando Soto,and Manuel Neco Otero. Carlos Osorio and Rafael Tufiño, two master artists from Puerto Rico, joined the group soon after its inception. Nitza Tufiño, Rafael Tufiño’s daughter, joined the collective in 1971. Originally located across the street from the Young Lords offices, Taller Boricua was a central meeting place for the Puerto Rican creative community in New York during early 1970s. The artists who gathered at Taller Boricua saw themselves as activists and were dedicated to creating “art for the people.” Though they operated as distinct organizations, personal interactions and artistic borrowings between the Young Lords and Taller Boricua fostered awareness and appreciation for Puerto Rico’s history and culture. Posters by Rafael Tufiño hung in the Young Lords Offices and Marcos Dimas’ poster of Emeterio Betances was reproduced in Palante. Likewise, Young Lords actions and the covers of P’alante became sources of inspiration for Taller members. The collective organized traveling exhibits in Latino neighborhoods throughout the city, hosted free printmaking workshops, and created posters for community events and political rallies such as the massive march to the United Nations for Puerto Rican independence that the Young Lords led on October 30, 1970 and rally to protest the death of Young Lord Julio Roldan. Taller Boricua’s street actions were complemented by a dedicated studio practice. The artists exceeded the Young Lords’ demand for a true education in Puerto Rico’s African and indigenous Taino heritages by creating a visual vocabulary that combined forms from both cultures. This Afro-Taino aesthetic became Taller Boricua’s signature style.

Featured artworks include:

**Rafael Tufiño**

*Jayuya, Liberate Puerto Rico Now!,* 1970

Silkscreen

22 ¼ x 29

Collection of Ken Taniguchi

Jayuya, *Liberate Puerto Rico Now!,* was created for a massive march to the United Nations organized by the Young Lords on October 30, 1970 commemorating the 30th anniversary of the Jayuya Uprising in Puerto Rico.

Marcos Dimas

*En el espíritu de Betances*, 1971

Digital reprint

Courtesy of the artist

Ramon Emeterio Betances was a nineteenth century abolitionist and independence leader credited with being the primary instigator of the Grito de Lares (Cry of Lares), the first major rebellion against Spanish rule that occurred in the town of Lares on September 23, 1868. A cropped version of Dimas’ portrait of Betances was printed on the cover of the Young Lords newspaper *Palante* on September 11, 1971.

**Marcos Dimas**

*Lolita Lebron Puerto Rican Freedom Fighter*, 1973

Digital Reprint

Courtesy of the artist

The source for this portrait of imprisoned nationalist party member, Lolita Lebron, was taken by a photograph of Lolita Lebron that featured on the cover of Palante.

**Marcos Dimas**

*Ese Es, Ese Es, 1973*

Digital reprint

Collection of the Artist

Dimas’ portrait of Pedro Albizu Campos, the imprisoned chairman of Puerto Rico’s nationalist party, is one of many outstanding works created by this artist of Puerto Rico’s independence leaders. The words below the portrait, “Ese Es, Ese Es,” (He Is, He Is) refers to a chant heard a rallies that affirmed Pedro Alzibu Campos as the champion of the Puerto Rican people. Numerous portraits and photographs of Albizu Campos could be seen on display at Taller Boricua and the Young Lords offices during the 1970s.

Adrian Garcia

*Julio Roldan, Young Lord*, 1970

Digital Reprint

Courtesy of Taller Boricua

In 1970, Young Lords member Julio Roldán – who had been arrested at a demonstration in the Bronx and was pending arraignment – was found hung to death in his cell at the “Tombs” prison facility in lower Manhattan. Garcia created this poster for The Young Lords procession through East Harlem with Roldán’s coffin.

Jorge Soto

*Taller Boricua*, c.1974

Digital Reprint

Courtesy of Marcos Dimas

Jorge Soto’s poster depicts a Puerto Rican “vejigante” carnival mask from the town of Loíza Aldea alongside a Taíno stone carving. It is embellished by several examples of Taíno pictographs throughout the upper portions of the poster. The script on the bottom half of page articulates Soto’s appreciation of the outlaw typography favored by subway graffitists who popularized “bubble style” letters in New York. Underscoring the graffiti allusion, Soto tagged the “I” in Boricua as though it were a subway column with the name of Taíno Cacique Urayoán, who led the first uprising against the Spanish in Puerto Rico. In addition to the Lares flag utilized by members of the Puerto Rican independence movement, Soto depicts a star and crescent moon in the left hand corner of the poster, a Muslim symbol often seen in newspapers circulated by followers of the Nation of Islam. Far from being folkloric, or even purely “Puerto Rican,” Soto’s poster presents Taller Boricua as an artist’s space whose members were aligned a multitude of vanguard political and aesthetic movements that operated above and below ground in the 1970s.