

2022

Partisan Genealogies: Radical Visual (and Political) Practices. An Introduction

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**Partisan Genealogies:
Radical Visual
(and Policial)
Practices**

**Guest editor
Paula Barreiro López**

ARTL@S BULLETIN

Volume 11, Issue 1
Spring 2022



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Cover légende : Milicienne républicaine s'entraînant au tir sur la plage à Barcelone en 1936 (Photo de Gerda Taro).

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Partisan Genealogies: Radical Visual (and Political) Practices. An Introduction

Paula Barreiro López

In 1961, the French journal *Partisans* published a manifest, signed by Vercors, declaring: “We are partisans”¹. The journal established from this first issue on a clear connection between the partisan fight against the Nazi forces during the 1930s and the diverse activism in favor of the Algerian Revolution, on both, French and Algerian soil. Its claims rehabilitated the liberation struggle as a revolutionary one, imbued by a program of decolonization and rooted in the internationalist ambitions of communism, but updated to the revolutionary impulse(s) of the South.

This extension of the antifascist struggle from the 1930s into the 1960s was not just acknowledged in *Partisans*, or by the leftist French intelligentsia, but became part of the DNA of an anticolonial and antifascist Left that was starting to organize on a global scale. Partisanship became identified with resistance of smaller groups (mostly hidden and protected by forest and mountains, eventually also in the cities) against the oppressing forces of fascism; but also against imperialism and associated with guerrilla tactics like sabotage, ambushes or raids, which could have a decisive impact on fighting the traditionally organized, larger and militarily superior troops of the enemy.

Within such (re)new(ed) partisan front that became highly visible with the struggles in places like Algeria, Cuba, Vietnam or Palestine, cultural practices would not just provide additional support, but took

an important and determining role. Already in the 1930s, artists, designers, photographers and choreographers had increasingly joined the partisan ranks to take a stand against fascism; and throughout the Cold War creative minds enlisted in internationalist movements that aimed, like their predecessors, at constructing a culture that could encompass the radical rupture embodied by the partisans.

From the antifascist movement of the 1920’s and 1930s, through the anticolonial and antiimperialist momentum of the 1960s, 1970s and even 1980’s—in a progression that is not linear, but has moments of conscious reactivation in multiple spaces and places—, this special issue traces a particular lineage of images and creative practices throughout Atlantic partisan geographies that together configured what we can call a globalized, cultural, partisan front. Eight papers address specific case studies from Spain, ex-Yugoslavia, Italy, the United States, Mexico and Central America, thus providing a transnational history of ideas and forms. In that way they intent to highlight many largely obscured connections between movements and practices that, although dispersed throughout multiple places and times and despite their differences, saw themselves within a shared genealogy and a joint utopian and revolutionary horizon.

The major research focus of this special issue is on the role that artistic, visual and performative productions, developed by the partisan movements and in conjunction with them, have had during the 20th century. Proposing a critical re-signification of

¹ Vercors, “Nous sommes des partisans”, in: *Partisans*, n° 1, 1961.

the concept of the partisan and of partisanship, the different papers included here aim to expand the scope of the partisan movements from the antifascist and national liberation struggles of Second World War (which are traditionally, historically bound), in order to understand them as configurative models of radical cultural and political production.

Looking at 20th and even 21st century struggles through the lens of cultural practices is important, as it can provide new perspectives. Until now, partisan projects have mostly been seen in conjunction with national historiographies and narratives, attending to their respective economic, political and strategically inputs, but undermining their internationalist core. Furthermore, scholarship on partisan movements has so far left largely unnoticed the role of the cultural production, considering it secondary as well as difficult to place and to evaluate in traditional terms due to the multilevel specificity of its cultural practices, based on the destruction of conventions and traditional means of production. Moreover the mixing of hierarchies, artistic categories and also of creative agents (professionals and amateurs) still does not fit well in the traditional accounts of art history. While the latter seems to be (still) rather interested in authorship, value and reputation, cultural partisan practices are difficult to place in (traditional) disciplinary analyses: they were anonymous and collective, (just) to a limited extent committed to artistic questions and definitely not interested in producing easily assessable commodities; and even though these last years have seen the emergence of some interesting studies regarding the here proposed angle, the analysis of the various interconnections of those productions from a transnational angle has still to be developed².

The essays of this special issue, with its focus on visual culture, artistic and performative practices, exhibition making, should be understood as attempts to advance in this specific direction. Together, they

² See for example, for the case of Yugoslavia see Gal Kirn, *The Partisan Counter-Archive. Retracing the Ruptures of Art and Memory in the Yugoslav People's Liberation Struggle*, Berlin: De Gruyter, 2020; for India see Sanjukta Sunderason, *Partisan aesthetics. Modern Art & India's Lon Decolonisation*, California: Stanford University Press, 2020. For the liberation movements in the Southern hemisphere from the 1960s on see Anne Garland-Mahler, *From the Tricontinental to the Global South. Race, Radicalism and Transnational Solidarity*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2018.

are drawing a visual, ideological and cultural map that helps to develop a new conceptualization of the partisan and of partisanship. Therein, they are responding to the debates generated within the framework of the project *Partisan Resistance(s): Visual culture, collective imagination and revolutionary memory* as well as following the ambitions of the international research platform *Decentralized Modernities: Art, Politics and Counterculture in the Transatlantic Axis from Cold War to Contemporaneity*, to whose output this publication will add a novel facet.³ Within this venture, our interest was to shift the traditional object for the history of partisan movements from political history and the factual document to visual culture and performative practices, with an extended analysis of multiple media and cultural practices that have been regarded until now as mere instruments of propaganda or subsidiary material. Therefore, for this special issue it is not only a question of thinking about how visual culture comes into contact with and fits into the social and political struggles of the resistance, but of asking, on the one hand, in what ways and according to what modalities it functions effectively within these struggles⁴; and on the other hand, of thinking, in agreement with Mitchell, about visual culture without reducing it “to the social construction of the visual, but to the visual construction of the social”⁵.

Weapons

Pablo Picasso's famous statement made during France's occupation in WWII, that a painting was much more than a mere decoration and had to be understood as “an instrument of war, attack and

³ Le projet *Ré.Part – Résistance(s) Partisane(s) : Culture visuelle, imaginaires collectifs et mémoire révolutionnaire* is based at the Université Grenoble Alpes (2019 to 2021) and federates a network of researchers. Most of them contributed to this present publication, and others, such as Béatrice Joyeux Prunel, Sonia Kerfa and Isabel Plante, greatly participated in our discussions and helped to put forward this collective work. This special issue and its introduction owe very much to these debates and especially to the collaboration with Gal Kirn for an international seminar that we coordinated together (*Partisan Cultures: Weapons of Mass Creation*, organized the 1st and 2nd of October 2021 at Volkstheater in Vienna, in collaboration with the WHW and Aziza Harmel from Kunsthalles Vienna). So my sincere thanks go to the entire Ré.Part team and to Gal in particular. For more information about the project and its program of activities see: <https://modernidadesdescentralizadas.com/projects/re-part-2/>; <https://modernidadesdescentralizadas.com/home/>

⁴ Slavoj Žižek, *The Universal Exception*, London: Bloomsbury, 2014.

⁵ William John Thomas Mitchell, *Que valent les images ? Une critique de la culture visuelle*, Paris: Les Presses du réel, 2014.

defence against the enemy”⁶, was following a logic clearly connected to his experiences during the Spanish Civil War. Actually, during this military conflict multiple artists had served the Republican front and contributed greatly to the social organization, but also the cohesion of the sieged Republic with their works. Such cultural dynamisms became visible and experienced in the multiplication of posters, guerrilla theatres and war dance spectacles on the streets that re-signified the work(s) of artists, writers, dancers, musicians and intellectuals as active part of the struggle. While a great part of these actors were also assuming positions in the government, their cultural and artistic productions were being considered as necessary tools to win the war.⁷ This equation of cultural products with weapons was convincingly reaffirmed in the visual and sophisticated propaganda apparatus constructed during the war. The internationalist DNA of the Republican front and the appeal to antifascist artists around the world is addressed in Jacopo Galimberti’s article (“Giandante X. An artist for Gramsci and the International Brigades”) that tackles the trajectory of Dante Pescò (1899-1984), called Giandante X. Politically active since the 1920’s in anarchist, antifascist organizations in Italy, he was engaged in artistic and political debates of this decade, contributing with his drawings to Gramsci’s journal *l’Unità*. Passing clandestinely via France, he decided to fight for the Republican Front, joining the Matteotti Battalion of Italian volunteers. Galimberti’s article reveals the strong connections between political and artistic avant-garde in the struggle against fascism since the 1920’s and stresses the importance of its radical visual practices, as weapons of mass communication, that in the case of Giandante X were bound, at first, to anti-fascist Italian mass media, and then—during the Spanish Civil War—to the Agitation and Propaganda Office of the International Brigades in Barcelona.⁸

⁶ Simone Tery, “Picasso n’est pas un officier dans l’armée française”, in: *Les Lettres Françaises*, 24 mars, 1945, p. 5.

⁷ As it was the case of Josep Renau who became Director General de Bellas Artes of the Spanish Republic. Regarding the role of culture during the Civil War see Basilio, Miriam, *Visual Propaganda, Exhibitions, and the Spanish Civil War* (New York: Ashgate, 2014).

⁸ Jacopo Galimberti, “Giandante X. An artist for Gramsci and the International Brigades”, *Artl@s Bulletin* vol. 11, issue 1 (Spring 2022): 29-48 <https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/artlas/vol11/iss1/2/>

The conviction of art as an “instrument of war” was consciously readapted to the partisan context of the 1960’s; and for example Picasso’s above-cited declaration opened the catalogue of the 1967 French Mai Salon taking place in Cuba⁹. This was a moment that mobilized artists on a large scale within (what became to be called) a cultural guerrilla front that also reaffirmed a terminological shift from partisan(-ship) to the Hispanic guerrilla, which Carl Schmitt had been already acknowledging in 1962 in his *Theory of the Partisan*¹⁰. Forged via multiple debates and encounters of internationalist and tricontinentalist spirit, like the Cultural Congress of Havana (January 1968), the concept of cultural guerrilla brought together many practitioners at the centre of a conscious strategy for conducting a counteroffensive against the capitalist, imperialist, and colonial social system, while assuming the legacy, the battles and the demands of the antifascist front since the Spanish Civil War—as it was interpreted (at least) by the Western participants.¹¹ Aiming for the reunion of all forces on the left, the notion of guerrilla elaborated during the 1960s, just as it was the case for the partisan in the 1930s, was much broader understood and referring to more than just a military tactic, including the intellectual and cultural realm. Multiple artists and cultural creatives, such as film directors, engaged in the cultural guerrilla front and collaborated in the creation of its visual arsenal. In this context, the configuration of a new status for works of art as bearers of a value equivalent to actual physical guerrilla weapons was explicitly reaffirmed. The artist, as a combatant with her/his own instruments, had been constantly emphasized since the late 1960’s. In fact, one of the leitmotifs of the Vietnam war years was that “a painting of protest is worth a grenade or a rifle”.¹²

⁹ *Salón de Mayo* (exh. cat.), La Habana, Pabellón Cuba, 30 July, 1967, p. 1.

¹⁰ Carl Schmitt, *The Theory of the Partisan: A Commentary/Remark on the Concept of the Political*, Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1963. On the complicated heritage of *The Theory of the Partisan*, written by the conservative Schmitt with reactionary intentions and (paradoxically) serving as reference for the right as well as for the left, see: Gal Kirn, “Tito’s No to Schmitt: Against the compatibility of the partisan figures, against the Blut und Boden ideology of populism”, PWD, Philosophy World Democracy, 21 November 2020 (available <https://www.philosophy-world-democracy.org/articles-1/titos-no-to-schmitt>). Access 5 February 2022).

¹¹ About the concept see Paula Barreiro López, “Cultural Guerrilla: Tricontinental Genealogies of 68”, in: Zeina Maasri, Cathy Bergin, Francesca Burke (eds.), *Transnational solidarity: Anticolonialism in the global sixties*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2022.

¹² These were the words of head of the South Vietnamese delegation (invited to visit the exhibition) of the Salon de Mayo in Havana 1967. Quoted in Gérauld Gassiot-Talabot,

This correspondence can be found at that period in multiple places around the world. For example, the artistic forces of the *Atelier Populaire* of Paris at École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts during May and June 1968 were very clear on the belligerent role of its production: openly renouncing to define the *affiches* in terms of visual character and aesthetic value and emphasizing instead the oeuvres' function and its political effectiveness. In this sense they considered artworks as "weapons in the service of the struggle, (whose), rightful place (was) in the centre of conflict, that is to say, in the streets and on the walls of the factories."¹³ Their creations (conceived collectively and anonymously by artists, but also militants without artistic training) left the traditional gallery space to take actively part in the struggle on the streets like other objects of the revolt (such as the cobblestones of the Rue Saint Michel, the barricades or even Molotov cocktails). In other contexts, like in Chile, the cultural work was in the same way firmly established as a key instrument of the struggle. The *brigadas pictóricas*, a partisan collective using pictorial practice that had developed since the 1960s and especially been cultivated by the Communist Youth, strongly asserted this vision. Consciously reaffirming themselves as brigades (—a term with clear antifascist connotations and traditions—) they painted collectively during clandestine, rapid actions on public walls. Conveying the program of the *Unidad Popular*, they greatly contributed with their paint brushes to the (very real) fight for visibility and counter-information during the conflicted electoral campaign that paved the way for Salvador Allende election victory in 1970.¹⁴ This militant and belligerent, artistic and political attitude eventually migrated to other latitudes, within the diasporic movements that emerged in 1973 from the fascist coup d'état in Chile. Anita Orze's article ("An Antifascist Biennale: Libertà al Cile in and from Venice") on the project *Libertà al Cile*, in support of the Allende's government at the Venice Biennial (1974), shows clearly how this

antifascist militancy was taken to Europe right into a centre of the hegemonic Western artistic world. In the aftermath of the storm of contestation in 1968, this venture initiated the short-lived period (1974-78) of the so-called *Nuova Biennale* [New Biennial] and converted the traditional exhibition event into an intermedia platform of committed, artistic and social manifestation for a democratic and antifascist culture. Invited as part of the biennial program, the Chilean *Brigada Internacional Salvador Allende* brought the partisan practices to the core of what became, at least for a short while, a partisan, artistic forum that reactivated internationalist networks, which connected the Chilean socialist project with the antifascist tradition of the Italian Left.¹⁵

Liberation

Partisan movements understood their respective actions within a revolutionary social transformation, well aware of the polyhedral dimensions of the struggle(s) and considering the implementation of a revolutionary culture as a part of the transformative endeavour. In this sense, already during the 1930's, the antifascist, armed militias were not only fighting for land and freedom, but also for liberation; something that leftists later would understand and cherish. For example, Toni Negri explains that in Italy of the 1970's: "We began to understand how the freedom won in the fight against fascism and the German Occupation had been achieved by men who shared our feelings, who didn't just fight against something but rather fought for a new world, one that they wanted to seize by making, experiencing, constituting, and creating it"¹⁶.

In the case of the Spanish Civil War, partisan cultures spread up-down and down-up, within governmental organizations as well as in independent ones, which all shared the common goal of winning the war, but also of transforming the Spanish society. In fact, this was clearly expressed in the press

¹² "La Havane: peinture et révolution", in: *Opus International*, 3 (1967), p. 16.

¹³ Declaration of the Atelier Populaire quoted in: Catherine Flood, Gavin Grindon, *Disobedient objects*, London: V & A Publishing, 2014 p. 20.

¹⁴ Eduardo Castillo Espinoza, *Puño y letra. Movimiento social y comunicación gráfica en Chile*, Santiago: Ocho libros, 2010.

¹⁵ Anita Orzes, "An Antifascist Biennale: Libertà al Cile in and from Venice", *Artl@s Bulletin* vol. 11, issue 1 (Spring 2022): 63-80 <https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/artlas/vol11/iss1/4/>

¹⁶ Toni Negri, "Exercises of freedom", in: *The Documenta 14 Reader*, Munich: Prestel Verlag, 2017, pp. 541-560.

during the time of the war, where one could read that the fight was not just “for bread, but also for knowledge at the reach of everyone; for a more just distribution, not only of material goods, but also of food for the spirit”¹⁷. So being partisan implied to imagine new configurations of the social, building in the urgencies of the struggle new cultural structures, educational organizations and understandings of what culture was and for whom it was destined. This is vividly explicit in the case of Yugoslavia during WWII, which Gal Kirn analyses in his article (“Counter-Archival Surplus: Remembering the Partisan Rupture in Postsocialist Times”). At the heat of the war and on occupied territory, the Yugoslav partisan liberation (led by ancient combatants of the International Brigades from the Spanish Civil War) went hand by hand with the construction of a project that entailed multiple military and cultural fronts (manifesting in print, exhibitions, poetry, music, dance as well as photography). His article demonstrates how for the partisans the essential role that art and culture had in their struggle was completely clear; something that today for us is (still) difficult to grasp. However, the drawing of Dore Klemenčič-Maj that Gal’s brings to the analysis is a good example and a conclusive evidence of such stance (Fig. 1). Drawn in 1943, as a sketch that embodied the essence of the partisan struggle, it is actually a new visual codification of what weapon meant in partisan terms: a rifle, a book, a theatre mask coexist together under a new regime of liberation under the partisan rule. This shows that if liberation entailed for the partisans a major social transformation, it necessarily also meant an artistic one. This is why, as Gal’s explains, the modern dancer Marta Paulin-Brina, when dancing a performance amongst the partisans of the partisan Rab brigade in the forest, felt the need to unlearn the conventional movements she had studied at the dance academy in order to build a new set of movements and to develop new forms of body language and expressions that could convey the

¹⁷ “por el pan, pero también por el saber al alcance de todos; por un reparto más justo, no sólo de bienes materiales, sino también de riquezas del espíritu” (Francisc Foguet i Boreu, “Cultura y teatro en las trincheras: la 31 división del ejército republicano”, in: *Teatro. Revista de estudios teatrales*, 13/14, June 1998-June 2001, p. 146).

radical, partisan, collective experience. Opposing fascism as well as bourgeois culture and its conventions (socially, but also aesthetically), her example provides us with an idea of the extraordinary effort and challenges involved in building a new cultural aesthetic and social space for and with the people who, until then, had been excluded from and by culture. This way it becomes clear that the transformation of Paulin-Brina’s moves and the invention of new ways of artistic body expression could not have happened in the dance studio, but just in the forest amongst her comrades¹⁸.

These ambitions were at the core of the antifascist movements since the 1930s, and continued to be valid in many other revolutionary projects afterwards. The production of art, theatre and dance on the streets of the cities at the Republican front in Spain or in the forests of the liberated partisan zones in Yugoslavia, shared the same urgency of replacing the bourgeoisie culture with a popular one; a desire that underpinned emancipatory projects of different kinds throughout the 1960s and 1970s.

Actually, the reconfiguration of cultural practices as a collaborative endeavour, which aimed to overcome the asphyxiating limits of bourgeois artistic evaluation and cultural organizations, was underlined in partisan and revolutionary movements all along the 20th century. For example, in a letter of intention an exiled, Portuguese militant, antifascist group operating in Grenoble explained to its members in December 1973 their collective initiative of a “proletarian calendar”. Handmade, and lacking the industrial character of professionally conceived products, with juxtapositions of slogans, cartoons and photographs as well as specific compositions for each month of the year, the calendar was offered to the subscribers of the journal *El Alambre* as an instrumental way for building a proletarian culture that was at the core of the struggle against the Portuguese dictatorship. For explaining the venture, the group posed the rhetoric question, “What is a Proletarian calendar?”, in order to then provide the

¹⁸ Gal Kirn, “Counter-Archival Surplus: Remembering the Partisan Rupture in Postsocialist Times”. *Artl@s Bulletin* vol. 11, issue 1 (Spring 2022): 14–28 <https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/artlas/vol11/iss1/1/>

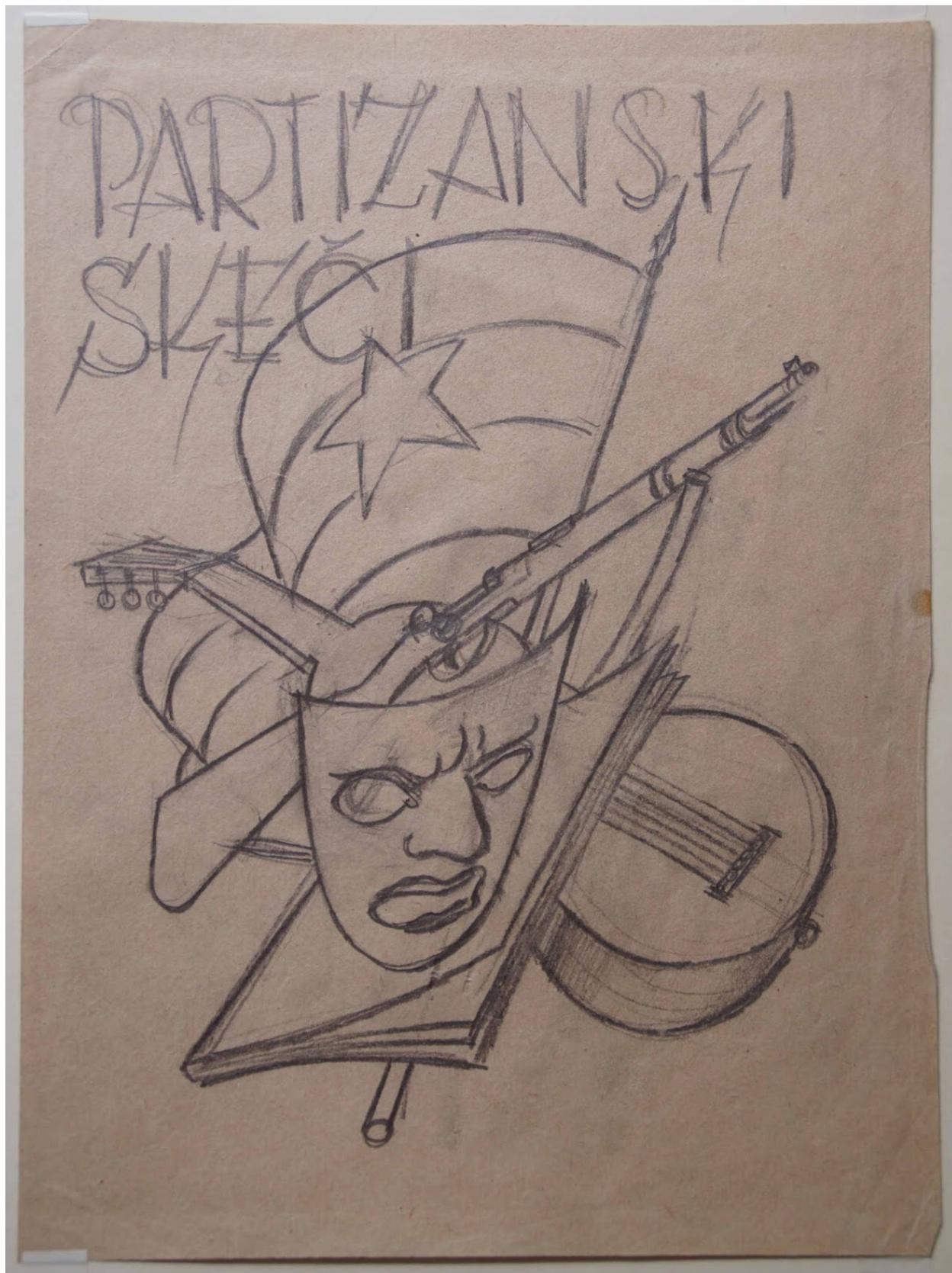


Figure 1. Partisan Sketches, a drawing (1943) made by Dore Klemenčič-Maj. Courtesy of Janin Klemenčič's personal archive.

answer: “It’s a calendar that seeks to make known the historical dates and the struggles that will remain in the history of our class . . . the bourgeoisie wants to put it into our heads that history is what they made”¹⁹.

This clear, simple and clever explanation encapsulates the main aim of the Promethean partisan cultural program. Fighting for a nationalist goal (the end of Portuguese dictatorship), but at the same time also for an internationalist one (the end of bourgeois society), they built culture in their own terms, setting and fixing moments, images in time, in which the proletarians were the subjects of history. The calendar considered culture as an expression of creativity, to which everybody has a right and in which everyone can participate actively and it furthermore shows that people were also taking the means of artistic/visual production in their own hands.

This idea fuelled partisan projects since WWII, finding in art, music or cinema a ground for expression, fight and resistance. Collective production(s) multiplied, blurring the boundaries between amateur and professional production, thus indicating the entrance of the masses in the field of creation as well as in the field of history. In opposing fascism, colonialism or imperialism, artists put their skills at the service of a cause and built a partisan counter-visibility that simultaneously affronted bourgeois culture, contested its system of artistic categorization and evaluation, and finally reconfigured the representation and visual codes of the oppressed (as empowered, collective, active groups taking control of their future).

Various places had been important laboratories for the configuration of these kinds of new languages and Mexico (since its revolution) serves here as a good example²⁰. The article of Fabiola Martínez (“Exposición Mexicana de Pintura y Estampa Contemporáneas. Mexican Art in the Eastern Front

1955: Poland and Bulgaria”) looks at the production of the *Taller de Gráfica Popular*, Diego Rivera and connects it to the endeavours of the *Frente Nacional de Artes Plásticas*, some decades later during the Cold War and its relations within the Eastern Bloc. She addresses a series of exhibitions aiming to show Mexican revolutionary art touring between 1953 and 1956 through Poland, Hungary and China. The artworks selected for the shows had forged a new visual imagery embedded in the revolutionary program, where popular and propagandistic ambitions met the experimental languages of the avant-garde. Incorporating avant-garde languages and figurative representation, they set the tone for a proletarian art consciously distanced from the Soviet orthodoxy, something that in several countries of the Eastern Bloc during the years of the Thaw actually found most appealing. Nevertheless, Fabiola explains against the specific dynamics of the Cold War as well as the exhaustion of the revolutionary rhetoric of the Mexican government the different layers of meaning that these practices took within national and international context(s) and points out the complexities of their institutionalization²¹.

Solidarity

Bringing together militants, intellectuals and artists within the partisan, cultural project was key to build solidarity between different social sectors, nationalities and classes. A shared condition between workers, but of internationalist scope was a key part of the partisan, antifascist, cultural front within the communist vocabulary. This model expanded from the 1960s to the 1970s in revolutionary geographies, generating a concept of solidarity specific to the liberation struggles, which was associated with mutual collaboration and tactical support within the national liberation movements. However, it went beyond material aid, defining a type of close collaboration that included the exchange of knowledge, a shared model of social

¹⁹ “O que é um calendário Proletário? É um calendário que procupra dar a conhecer as datas históricas e as lutas que ficarao na historia da nossa classe. . . . a burguesia quer meter-nos na cabeça que a história foram eles que a fizeram.” (in: *O Alambre*, Grenoble, 15 January, 1974).

²⁰ David Craven, *Art and revolution in Latin America, 1910-1990*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002.

²¹ Fabiola Martínez, “Exposición Mexicana de Pintura y Estampa Contemporáneas. Mexican Art in the Eastern Front 1955: Poland and Bulgaria”. *Art@s Bulletin* vol. 11, issue 1 (Spring 2022): 49-62 <https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/artlas/vol11/iss1/3/>

organization and visual training, as exemplified in the co-operation between Cuba and the revolutionary movement gathering around Amílcar Cabral. The latter had dispatched talented students to the Caribbean Island, in order to acquire skills considered essential for the liberation struggle back home. This was the case of Flora Gomes and Sana Na N'Hada, who had been trained at the ICAIC (Instituto Cubano de Arte Industria Cinematográfica) and would use this knowledge later for filming the revolution of Guinea Bissau²².

From this perspective, solidarity was shaping a transnational movement, internationalist in principle, linked to the need of sharing resources and providing aid in the struggle for liberation—in which the visual representation and codification had a key importance. The Tricontinental built an effective visual apparatus through film, photography and poster production that integrated the struggles of the three continents Asia, Africa and (Latin-)America, creating an imaginary community that connected revolutions around the world (from Vietnam to Algeria, Central America and Nicaragua); a strategy that other antifascist movements would follow, too (such as the Portuguese militants against the dictatorship). The article of Laura Ramírez Palacio (“Infancia y revolución”) addresses the visual apparatus of the revolutionary processes in El Salvador and Nicaragua during the 1980s, through the figure of the child soldier. Considering its *longue durée* iterations (since the 19th century), her paper rehabilitates this for a long-time forgotten, politically active figure in revolutionary processes, which embodied the collective fight towards liberation and was key to mobilize international solidarity. Her article shows as well how geographical interconnection and solidarity between struggles was consciously and necessarily visually forged. On the one hand, as it is visible in the journal *Tricontinental*, where some of the images studied in Ramírez Palacio’s article were published, the use of photography and geographical indications were crucial to create a custom-made world map that provided for

the reader an explicatory, revolutionary topography to hold on to. On the other hand, the partisan imagery materialized the important, affective element of inter-human collaboration and the creation of subjectivity that the concept of solidarity included: by multiplying images of transrace collaboration, multiple revolutionary subjects (men, women, kids) but also distributing and circulating material (like posters) that could be collected, touched and appropriated²³.

If Tricontinental solidarity seemed to be located in a specific geopolitical space (its logo features a globe with an outstretched forearm and rifle in its hand, thus symbolizing the armed struggle of the Third World), the concept was understood from a de-territorializing standpoint, considering solidarity from a de-localized, collective perspective that could include minorities around the world, even including the (global) North. To that extent, the United States’ Black movement was considered an operative part of the Tricontinental struggle, regarded as fighting from within the belly’s monster.²⁴ Olga Fernández’ article (“Partisan Dilemmas between Activism and Socially Engaged Art”) traces its echoes, which reverberated in the public sphere of New York, from the city’s bankruptcy in 1975 throughout the following years of catastrophic decay. She focuses on the Latino neighbourhood *Loisaida* (Lower East Side) and its activist core. Seat of the Young Lords and the Nuyorican movement, it was considered by that time as a war zone within the social and economic struggles that marked the gentrification and the soon following, radical neoliberalisation of the city. Becoming a new partisan front, cinema, collective murals as well as community gardens became fundamental weapons and cultural tactics to fight against gentrification as well as for the right to inhabit the neighbourhood and to transform it—in a creative way—into a place of collaborative living. Olga’s article discusses its grassroots activism to produce social change and problematizes

²² Filipa César, *Luta ca caba inda: itme place matter voice 1967-2017*, Berlin: Archive Books, 2017.

²³ Laura Ramírez Palacio, “Infancia y revolución. Reflexiones sobre la figura del niño combatiente dentro de las narrativas visuales revolucionarias y de liberación a partir los casos de Nicaragua y El Salvador en la década de 1980”. *Art@s Bulletin* vol. 11, issue 1 (Spring 2022): 89-109 <https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/artlas/vol11/iss1/6/>

²⁴ Anne Garland-Mahler, *From the Tricontinental to the Global South. Race, Radicalism and Transnational Solidarity*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2018.

its interconnections with the expansion of artistic practices towards models of collaborative organization, thus rehabilitating social and activist practices as ‘parts of the same thing’. In that sense, she shifts the terms and sees how partisan tradition can be a productive angle of analysis for understanding “contemporary socially engaged art”.²⁵

Interrupted genealogies?

The lines of contact that nourished the filiations between the antifascist movements of the Second World War, anti-imperialism and anticolonial politics, which the new partisans promoted, made it possible to establish a partisan genealogy (with a visual counterpart of iconographical models acting as commons for different movements around the world). As Enzo Traverso explains, this genealogy was fundamental in mobilizing left-wing cultures around the struggle for the future²⁶. However, with the collapse of Communism and the epistemological turn that re-signified the comprehension of the 20th century (from the century of revolutions to the century of victims and violence), the process that deactivated the revolutionary and emancipatory memory determined a disappearance of the partisan memory; something that Gal Kirn’s article problematizes within the specific context of the disintegration of the Yugoslavian project in post-socialist times, which converged with the “nationalist repossession of memory” and the dismissal of the partisan past in a very direct way: by the orchestrated destruction of monuments, memories and traces of the Yugoslav partisan past. As Traverso writes: “The memory of the Gulag erased that of the revolution, the memory of the Holocaust replaced that of the antifascism, and the memory of slavery eclipsed that of anticolonialism: the remembrance of the victims seems unable to coexist with the recollection of their hopes, of their struggles, of their conquests and their defeats”²⁷. The histories

of these (pro-)active fights are currently seeming to be largely forgotten, with their archives perishing or disintegrating; at best, they appear scattered and disconnected. However, as Bifo Berardi affirms (referring to protest movements that can surely be considered within this genealogy of the partisan movements we want to discuss) that “even in defeat and retreat, these movements are the bearers of a possibility that is not yet completely extinct.”²⁸

The Alpine Battalion that Jaime Vindel studies in his article (“Antifascism and Wildness: Partisan Ecologies” between the Spanish Civil War and the Global Warming Era) is an eloquent case of such stance. Formed during the Spanish Civil War from a heterogeneous group of people and ideologies, it operated in the border of the Republican front in the Guadarrama Mountains, protecting the Republican territory against fascist troops. Since that time, this mountain range has been inscribed into very different traditions, with traces to a specific fascist memory (it is after all the site of the megalomaniac, francoist monument *El Valle de los Caídos*), but also to touristification and leisure in contemporary Spain.²⁹ The disappearance of the battalion’s traces from the Guadarrama massif expresses vividly, on the one hand, the loss of significance of partisan history (and histories) as well as their values in the symbolic battle for memory; on the other hand, it also evokes new questions about the role that those traces can mean today³⁰.

²⁸ “... aun derrotados y en retirada, dichos movimientos son los portadores de una posibilidad que aún no está completamente extinta” (Franco Bifo Berardi, *Futurabilidad. La era de la impotencia y el horizonte de la posibilidad*, Buenos Aires: Caja Negra, 2019, p. 71).

²⁹ Responding to the ambitions of the dictator Francisco Franco and built during a period of more than 20 years (from 1940 to 1959), the *Valle de los Caídos* (Valley of the Fallen) is emplaced at the Sierra de Guadarrama. It consists of an enormous underground basilica, crowned by a huge cross and adjoined by a monastery that follows distinct Spanish baroque models (about this historical connection see Tobias Locker, “Baroque in the Construction of a National Culture in Francoist Spain. An Introduction”, in: Paula Barreiro-López, Carey Casten, Tobias Locker (dir.): *The ‘Baroque’ in the Construction of a National Culture in Francoist Spain*, Bulletin of Spanish Studies XVI, número special, vol. 5, 2014, pp. 668-9.). Ostensibly, it was a symbol of national reconciliation for fallen soldiers from both sides, who were buried there, but in reality, the monument was completed twenty years after the end of the war, mostly by thousands of Republican prisoners working as forced labourers under slave-like conditions. Since 1975, it has been the commemorative site of the Spanish dictator Francisco Franco, whose tomb it housed until 2019, when a Socialist Party formed a government of coalition with Unidas Podemos and finally enforced - under the *Ley de la memoria histórica* that had already been approved 10 years before - the removal of the dictator’s remains and their relocation to a private family mausoleum on the cemetery El Pardo-Mingorrubio

³⁰ Jaime Vindel, “Antifascism and Wildness. Partisan Ecologies” between the Spanish Civil War and the Global Warming Era”, *Art@s Bulletin* vol. 11, issue 1 (Spring 2022): 110-123 <https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/artlas/vol11/iss1/7/>

²⁵ Olga Fernández López, “Partisan Dilemmas between Activism and Socially Engaged Art: Situations in Loisaída at the end of the Seventies”, *Art@s Bulletin* vol. 11, issue 1 (Spring 2022): 81-94 <https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/artlas/vol11/iss1/5/>

²⁶ Enzo Traverso, *Left-Wing Melancholia. Marxism, History and Memory*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2016.

²⁷ *Ibid.* 10.

It is significant that from the demise of global capitalism 2008 onwards, diverse players, reaching from artists like Filipa Cesar to Black Lives Matter activists, have been going back to the partisan archive(s) in order to reactivate traces, actions and documents; recuperating the scattered memories for the present, while situating them firmly within their historical contexts; recognizing the key contribution that cultural production and performative collaboration had for generating constituent power. The case of the artist Nuria Güell and her Resurrection project that my article addresses (“Ressusciter la lutte antifasciste : Art, politique et mémoire entre la guerre civile et l’Espagne d’aujourd’hui”), shows how the reactivation of the guerrilla memory plays a decisive role in the memorial battle(s) regarding the Spanish dictatorship and its fascist core. It reconnects this story with a genealogy of partisan practices under (and against) the Franco regime that has been overlooked in art history and official political accounts. Thinking partisan, radical political and visual practices challenge traditional disciplinary boundaries and reaffirms the necessity of a closer look for thinking our disciplines anew³¹.

Furthermore, the recuperation of such conflicted and hidden memory has a new potential in today’s social cultural and political movements, where—as the article of Jaime Vindel points out—conflicts of the past “seem to be re-emerging in a new form”. His article makes explicit the direct relations between the anti-fascist struggles and their locations in the wildness. Inscribing his analysis into the contemporary condition of ecological collapse as well as Andreas Malm’s concept of partisan ecologies, he rehabilitates the (partisan) wilderness as a place of resistance. Reconnecting the almost lost history (and creativity) of antifascist, decolonial and anti-capitalist fights is a necessary part to reconquer the memory and the space for a new kind of partisan politics within the new struggle(s) against the convergence of corporative, economic, and political power with neo-fascist and eco-fascist agendas.

³¹ Paula Barreiro López, “Ressusciter la lutte antifasciste : Art, politique et mémoire entre la guerre civile et l’Espagne d’aujourd’hui”, *Artl@s Bulletin* vol. 11, issue 1 (Spring 2022): 124-139 <https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/artlas/vol11/iss1/8/>

Going back to what Gal Kirn denominates the partisan counter-archive seems crucial today when new ways of collaboration and internationalism are most needed in order to find alternatives and possible futures for a collapsing present.³² Partisans practices remind us of the strong ties of transnational collaboration, affectivity and identification that are today so desperately needed in order to repair and to build. So, revisiting them has undeniable historical importance, because it not only decentralizes hegemonic narratives and unveils counter-cartographies of resistance, but also encourages an archaeological exploration of the origin of partisan and insurrectional movements, which places historical research at the centre of critical dilemmas of the present³³.

Acknowledgments

This special issue has been conceived in the framework of the project *Ré.Part. - Résistance(s) Partisane(s): Culture visuelle, imaginaires collectifs et mémoire révolutionnaire* (Université Grenoble Alpes, ANR-15-IDEX-02) and the research project *MoDe(s) – Decentralized Modernities: Art, Politics and Counterculture in the Transatlantic Axis during the Cold War* (Universidad de Barcelona, HAR2017-82755-P). We are very thankful for the support of the Jean Monnet Excellence Centre IMAGO (École normale supérieure - Université Paris Sciences Lettres, co-funded by the Erasmus + Program of the European Union) and of the Laboratoire de Recherches Historiques Rhône Alpes. Many thanks to the editorial team of *Artl@s Bulletin* as well as Tobias Locker for the work done on the manuscripts.

*In loving memory of Laura Ramírez Palacio
(1988–2022)*

³² Gal’s heuristic definition of the concept implies two aspects, departing with “the prefix *counter*, which should not just be understood as a combative stance towards the dominant conservative and nostalgic reading of the recent past, but also as a re-reading of the past that mobilises revolutionary resources in order to imagine a different (lost) future.” (Kirn, “Counter-Archival Surplus”, pg). For a discussion on the relation between the counter-archive and partisan practices see Kirn, but also the program of conference organized by the same author in collaboration with ICI Berlin: *Counter – Archive*, ICI Berlin Kulturlabor Institute for Cultural Inquiry 29-30 April 2021 (<https://www.ici-berlin.org/events/counter-archive/>).

³³ Mark Fisher, “Acid Communism (Unfinished Introduction)”, *Blackout*, 2016, URL: <https://my-blackout.com/2019/04/25/mark-fisher-acid-communism-unfinished-introduction/> (accessed, 6 January 2022).