

HYPERALLERGIC

Sensitive to Art & its Discontents

August 14, 2015

The Young Lords' Radical Agenda and the Problems that Persist

by Vic Vaiana



Young Lords memorabilia, including passports to China, a beret, and Rampart magazine (all photos by the author for Hyperallergic)

The Bronx Museum of Art, El Museo del Barrio, and Loiscida Inc. are exhibiting the work of the artists and activists in the Young Lords Party in [¡Presente! The Young Lords in New York](#). Curated by Johanna Fernandez and Yasmin Ramírez, the Bronx exhibit aims to give local and global context for Young Lords's activism while situating the social conflicts they addressed in ongoing struggles.

In the museum's lobby, an interactive piece invites visitors to flag different "points of struggle" on a tabletop map of New York's five boroughs. Some of these points on the map represent moments in the

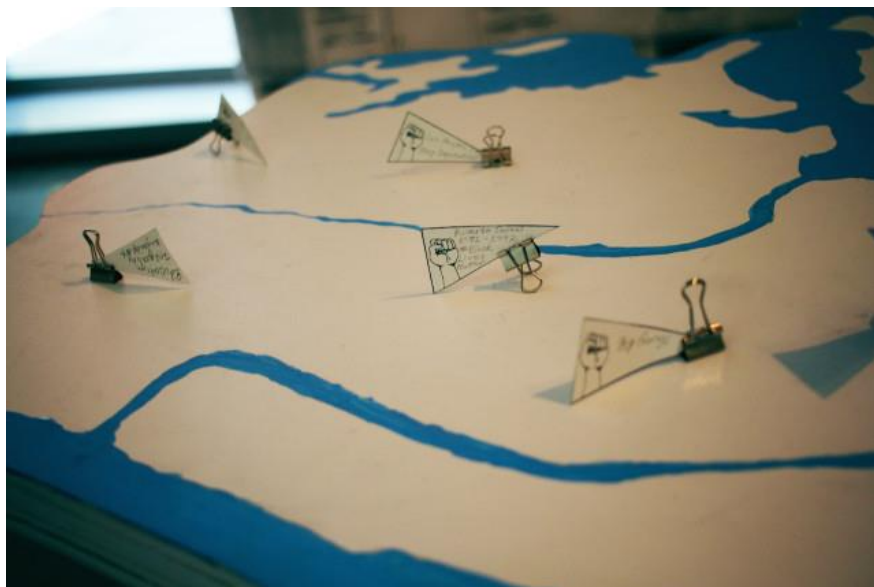
public consciousness, such as the lone flag on Staten Island indicating the site of Eric Garner’s death. Other points cryptically tell stories of personal struggle, such as “Ricardo Israel 1991-1992

#BlackLivesMatter.”



Shepard Fairey, “Visual Disobedience” (2004)
screenprint on paper, 18 x 24 inches (click to
enlarge)

The Young Lords Party was a political group that emerged from the Puerto Rican community in the United States. Through its organizing, the group engaged with urban issues such as tenant’s rights and police brutality. The group’s political actions are immortalized through their pamphlets, newspaper, and posters, on view here. The Young Lords’s design is rooted in the leftist agitprop tradition, incorporating striking symbols and colors that can be easily reproduced and distributed. The exhibition is also showcasing radical art inspired by the Young Lords, including work by Shepard Fairey.



Several “sites of struggle” flagged on an interactive tabletop map of the the city. Hatuey Ramos-Fermín, “Vine pa’ echar candela” (2015)



Two of the Young Lords Party flags draped above a map of New York City. Hatuey Ramos-Fermin, "Vine pa' echar candela" (2015)

Legal and photographic documents, including a wall plastered with photocopies of FBI documents, highlight the intimidation the activists must have felt in their pursuit of social justice. The radical community galvanized by the Young Lords — first in Chicago, then New York — is likewise documented through photography peppered throughout the exhibit, including work by [Michael Abramson](#) and [Fred W. McDarrah](#).

¡Presente! fosters institutional memory of the Young Lords's agenda by situating the group's struggle within the persistent problems of urban life, defined by quotidian yet flagrant inequities like access to affordable housing. The flurry of dates and events denoted by the Young Lords' poster art serve as plot points and touchstones in New York's cultural and social history. The group's work and anti-racist mission resonate with the current wave of movements like Black Lives Matter or the Fight for \$15, who continue to organize against the same social forces that the Young Lords resisted.



Juan Sanchez, "Untitled (Las Tres Marias)" (1981) mixed media collage, 11 x 27 inches

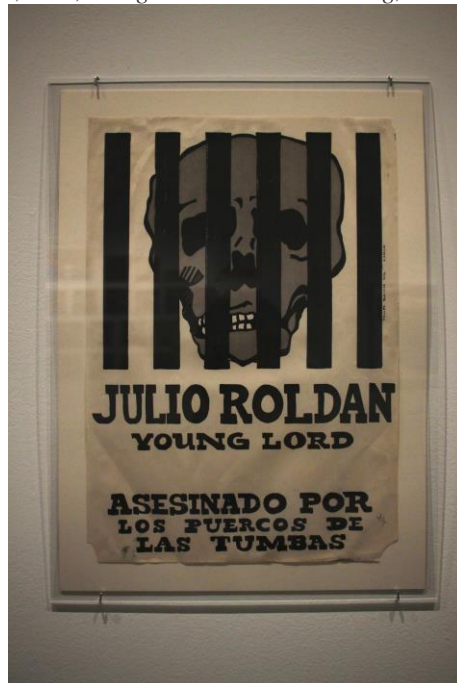


Miguel Luciano, "Machetero Air Force One's (Filiberto Ojeda Uptowns)" (2007) vinyl and acrylic on sneakers,

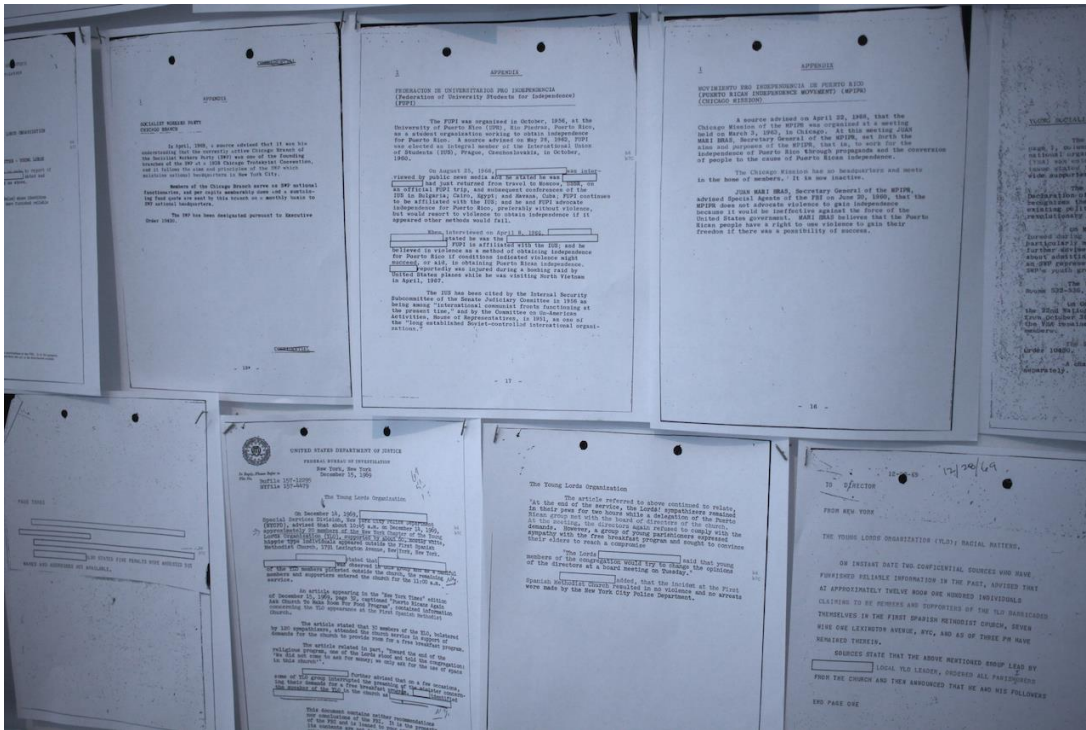
11 x 4 x 4 ½ in



Raphael Montañez Ortiz, "Archeological Find #21: The Aftermath" (1961), destroyed sofa, wood, cotton, vegetable fiber, wire, and glue on wooden backing, 84 x 54 x 24 inches



Adrian Garcia "Julio Roldan, Young Lord" (1970), offset lithograph, 22 x 16 inches



Hatuey Ramos-Fermin, "Vine pa' echar candela" (2015), Wall of FBI documents investigating the Young Lords.

¡Presente! The Young Lords in New York continues at the Bronx Museum of Arts (1040 Grand Concourse, Bronx) through October 18; at El Museo del Barrio (1230 5th Ave, East Harlem, Manhattan) through October 17; and at Losaida Inc. (710 E 9th St, Alphabet City, Manhattan) through October 10.