The Chicano and Puerto Rican artists featured in *Pressing the Point* led a remarkable efflorescence of the graphic arts during the 1970s. The prints and posters they produced engaged pressing social and political issues, and were circulated to members of their communities through modes of distribution that ranged from displaying works on city streets to holding exhibitions in art galleries. This efflorescence was nurtured by the increasingly close connections that had begun to link the lives and histories of Chicano and Puerto Rican artists during this period. In addition to sharing an artistic heritage rooted in the study of Mexican art, especially José Guadalupe Posada and the Taller de Gráfica Popular, these artists also shared similar historical experiences—similarities that had begun to become more visible in the 1960s, when movements for self-determination and cultural reclamation made them more conscious of the ties that bound them together. The powerful work that these artists produced during this period played a leading role in framing issues of cultural identity that artists of the 1980s and 1990s have continued to explore.

The first phase of the Puerto Rican Art Movement dates back to the late 1940s and 1950s—a period known as the “Puerto Rican Renaissance.” This flowering of the arts in Puerto Rico emerged during the administration of Luis Muñoz Marín (1948–64). The island’s first freely elected governor, Muñoz Marín initiated a series of economic and educational reforms modeled after President Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s Works Progress Administration (WPA). In 1946, the Departamento de Educación Pública hired the WPA artists Edwin Rosskam and Jack and Irene Delano, who were already working in Puerto Rico, to train other artists to produce films, silkscreen posters, and illustrated books for use as visual aids in a massive health and literacy campaign. Renamed the División de Educación de la Comunidad (DIVEDCO) in 1949, the agency operated a renowned printing workshop until its demise in 1985. Because the opportunities to study printmaking on the island were limited before the establishment of DIVEDCO, the leading Puerto Rican artists of the 1950s—Lorenzo Homar, Rafael Tufiño, Antonio Maldonado, and Carlos Raquel Rivera—were schooled abroad. With the exception of Rivera, these artists studied with Mexican artists. Homar attended classes with Rufino Tamayo at the Brooklyn Museum School of Art in 1946, and Tufiño and Maldonado enrolled in the Academia de San Carlos in Mexico City, where they studied with Alfredo Zuleta of the Taller de Gráfica Popular from 1947 to 1949. In addition, Homar, Tufiño, and Maldonado guided the direction of two important printmaking workshops: the Centro de Arte Puertorriqueño (1950–52) and the Taller del Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña (1957–85). Subscribing to the ethos that art must be socially relevant, the artists associated with these workshops produced print portfolios that addressed the social, political, and economic conditions Puerto Ricans faced as a result of modernization during the post–World War II era. In addition, they adopted the linocut technique favored by the Taller de Gráfica Popular to create fine art prints at affordable prices.

Tufiño’s linocut from the print portfolio *Los casos de Ignacio y Santiago* (The Tales of Ignacio and Santiago, 1953) reveals the influence of the Mexican School. The image of a jíbaro (man from the countryside) carrying a small wooden casket alludes to the high infant mortality rate in Puerto Rico’s rural areas because of malnutrition. His gaunt face and enlarged hands, gnarled by manual labor, bear the stamp of David Alfaro Siqueiros, while the thick dark lines that imbue the image with sharp contrasts and depth is reminiscent of the style of Arturo García Bustos of the Taller de Gráfica Popular. By the time Homar produced Grabados mexicanos (Mexican Prints, 1958), an exhibition poster executed after the style of Mexico’s legendary turn-of-the-century printmaker, José Guadalupe Posada, Puerto Rican artists had thoroughly absorbed the lessons imparted by the Taller de Gráfica Popular. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, Puerto Rican printmakers associated with the graphic arts workshops of DIVEDCO and the Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña learned their craft from master artists such as Homar and Tufiño. Although dedicated to executing Puerto Rican subject matter, the two artists encouraged their students to study Mexican art. Homar’s heir apparent, Antonio Martorell, worked in Mexico City from 1978 to 1981 teaching printmaking and drawing at La Esmeralda, an affiliate art school of the Instituto de Bellas Artes. His stunning print portfolio, *Luto absoluto: Homenaje a Toña la Negra* (Absolute Mourning: Homage to Toña la Negra, 1983) is the outcome of a fruitful engagement with Mexican culture. Created in tribute to Toña la Negra, a bolero singer from Veracruz who died in 1982, Luto absoluto draws on Mexico’s Day of the Dead iconography featuring skeletons imitating human behavior. The jaunty, cigarette-smoking skull represents the composer Augustín Lara, whose songs inspired Toña’s best vocals.

Puerto Rican artists living in New York during the 1960s and 1970s recall being better acquainted with Mexican than Puerto Rican art. By that time, Mexican muralism had been integrated into the modernist canon, while the achievements of Puerto Rican printmakers remained practically unknown outside of Latin American circles. Nevertheless, the promotion of Puerto Rican art in the United States, together with the institutionalization of the Mexican School, have exposed contemporary Latino artists in New York, like James de la Vega, to both heritages. Currently based in East Harlem, this young artist of Puerto Rican descent has executed a series of outdoor murals featuring images of dancing skulls that integrate Puerto Rican and Mexican traditions.

Whereas many Puerto Rican artists have turned to Mexican art as a point of departure, most Chicano artists regard Mexico as their point of origin. The art historian Shifra M. Goldman dates the beginning of the Chicano Art Movement’s incorporation of the Taller de Gráfica Popular’s iconography to the publication of prints from their portfolios, as well as prints by Posada, on the covers of the United Farm Workers’ newspaper, *El Malcriado.* Appropriating icons of Mexican revolutionaries such as Emiliano Zapata and Pancho Villa, Chicano artists publicized “La Causa” by producing images about the continuing struggle to improve economic opportunities for agrarian laborers. For example, Carlos A. Cortez’s posters of the 1960s and 1970s, such as *Ricardo Flores-Magón/Movimiento Artístico Chicano* (Ricardo Flores-Magón/Chicano Artistic Movement, 1978), evoke the bold graphic style of the Taller de Gráfica Popular. Cortez continued employing the linocut technique during an era when silkscreen was the most popular print medium.

**Parallel Lives**

While Chicano and Puerto Rican printmakers share a common artistic heritage as a result of their absorption of Mexican social realism and the manifestazión, parallel expressions among them cannot simply be attributed to the notion...
that one group of artists influenced the other. Particularly during the 1960s and 1970s, the affinities between Chicano and Puerto Rican artists reflected their shared experience of participating in popular political struggles to attain social justice in the United States. Although they carried out their campaigns largely within their own communities, a web of networks in the form of mass protests, issue-oriented coalitions, artist calls, and group exhibitions brought Chicano and Puerto Rican artists together from time to time.

The conditions for Chicano and Puerto Rican solidarity took shape during the post–World War II era, when floods of new arrivals from Mexico under the Bracero Program, and of Puerto Ricans under Operation Bootstrap, were hired as farm workers across the United States. Constituting the two largest Spanish-speaking communities in the nation, the next generation of Chicanos and Puerto Ricans included activists who struggled to institute bilingual education and to incorporate their histories in school curricula. Subject to unfair labor practices, voting restrictions, and housing discrimination, Chicanos and Puerto Ricans, as well as African Americans, joined forces to demand civil rights reforms and an end to labor practices, voting restrictions, and housing discrimination. Chicano and Puerto Rican artists together presented coalitions, artist calls, and the form of mass protests, issue-oriented coalitions, artist calls, and group exhibitions brought Chicano and Puerto Rican artists together from time to time.

The representation of political protest as a form of performance art dovetails with the worker-oriented theatrical productions of Luis Valdez’s Teatro Campesino and ASCO’s counterculture happenings. Nelson Sambolin’s Congresso de Trabalhadores Socialistas (Socialist Workers Congress, 1972), produced for the Puerto Rican Socialist Workers Congress, also puts a friendly face on the serious business of labor struggles. Rendered in Pop-style benday dots and fluorescent blue and yellow colors, smiling workers wave at us to join them from behind a barricade. The majority of the other posters in this section, however, reflect the volatility of an era that witnessed assassinations of leaders such as President John F. Kennedy, Malcolm X, Martin Luther King, Robert F. Kennedy, and Che Guevara, and that suffered catastrophic losses of family and friends in the Vietnam war.

Tony Evora’s explosive poster, Cero Plebiscito/No Vietnam (Zero Plebiscite/No Vietnam, 1966), captures the agitated mood of the late 1960s. The poster relates to events in 1966, a year when the Puerto Rican government proposed holding a plebiscite to decide the island’s political status. The U.S. Congress, however, advised the organizers that they would not recognize the plebiscite as legally binding. Consequently, the pro-independence supporters lobbied the public to boycott the process. An additional cause for alarm at that time was the fact that Puerto Ricans, who are denied voting rights in U.S. presidential elections, were being sent to Vietnam in droves. Evora’s screaming figure conveys outrage at the injustice of men being enlisted in battles that they had not chosen. Chicano artists later produced graphics displaying similar sentiments for the National Chicano Moratorium March against the Vietnam War in Los Angeles in 1970.

Political unrest in Latin America was another ongoing concern for Chicano and Puerto Rican artists during the late 1970s and 1980s. Malquias Montoya’s powerful print asking U.S. workers to renounce bloodshed, El Salvador (1981), is one of many works that catalyzed the Artist Call Against U.S. Intervention in Central America. Lasting from 1983 to 1989, Artist Call was a nationwide campaign that numerous artists supported by organizing exhibitions that drew attention to United States foreign policies that contributed to the eruption of civil wars in El Salvador and Nicaragua.

As Puerto Rican and Chicano artists have addressed social and civil rights issues from similar perspectives, they also share the common legacy of having spearheaded the creation of alternative art galleries. They have done so when discrimination against Chicanos and Puerto Ricans made it exceedingly difficult for them to participate in mainstream venues, alternative galleries provided artists with spaces to hone their craft and present their work. The selection of posters in the "Collective Expressions" section announcing group exhibitions and collaborative workshops underscores the important role that these community-based institutions played in the advancement of Chicano and Puerto Rican art. The heterogeneous styles of these posters indicate that Chicano and Puerto Rican artists drew on various sources, including Pop art, Precolumbian iconography, cartoons, and graffiti, to create compositions that appealed to diverse audiences. Pressing the Point includes examples of posters produced for organizations based in California, New York, and Puerto Rico that were active in the 1970s: Taller Bija in Puerto Rico, Taller Boricua and El Museo del Barrio in New York, Self-Help Graphics in Los Angeles, and Galería de la Raza and the Mission Cultural Center in San Francisco.

During the 1970s, Chicano and Puerto Rican art was also circulated in academic journals. Seen in context with contemporary writers, poets, and theorists, Chicano and Puerto Rican visual artists were positioned as key players in a larger vanguard cultural movement. First published by the University of Indiana in 1973, Revista Chicano Rápida exemplifies the pan-ethnic coalition building that linked Chicano and Puerto Rican scholars and the more inclusive concept of Lamindad that came to fruition in the 1980s and 1990s. Specifically, it addressed the lives of Chicanos and Puerto Ricans in the Midwest, who live side by side in cities like Chicago, Bloomington, and Springfield. The journal occasionally published special issues that exclusively featured either Chicano or Puerto Rican contributors—expressions of separation that went hand in hand with building a platform for Latino studies that would respect the distinct heritages of Latin American peoples.

**Striking Differences**

In “Myth and Comparative Cultural Nationalism: The Ideological Uses of Aztlán,” Genaro M. Padilla notes that there is a clear association between political independence movements and cultural nationalism. Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, social activists...
VIDAS PARALELAS, DIFERENCIAS SORPRENDENTES: NOTAS SOBRE LAS ARTES GRÁFICAS CHICANA Y PUERTORRIQUEÑA DE LOS AÑOS SETENTA
por Yasmin Ramirez

En los años setenta, los artistas chicanos y puertorriqueños incluidos en Pressing the Point estuvieron a la cabeza de un florecimiento explosivo de las artes gráficas. Estos artistas crearon grabados y carteles sobre problemas urgentes de índole social y política y los difundieron en sus respectivas comunidades gracias a medios de distribución innovadores. Las conexiones entre las vidas y los historiales de artistas chicanos y puertorriqueños, que por entonces empezaban a estrecharse, fomentaron este caudal creativo. Además de compartir un patrimonio común, arraigado en el estudio del arte mexicano, sobre todo el de José Guadalupe Posada y el Taller de Gráfica Popular, estos artistas compartían también experiencias históricas semejantes. Las semejanzas se habían puesto muy en evidencia en el decenio de 1960, cuando ambas comunidades, impulsadas por sus movimientos de autodeterminación y rescate cultural cobraron mayor conciencia de los vínculos que las unían. Las obras de gran impacto creadas entonces por estos artistas fueron un factor fundamental en el planteamiento de cuestiones que los artistas de los decenios de 1980 y 1990 han seguido investigando.

La primera fase del movimiento de arte puertorriqueño data de fines de los años cuarenta y de los años cincuenta, el período del denominado “renacimiento puertorriqueño”. Este florecimiento de las artes en Puerto Rico se produjo durante el gobierno de Luis Muñoz Marín (1948-1964), el primer gobernador libremente electo de la isla, que puso en marcha una serie de reformas económicas y educacionales inspiradas en la Work Progress Administration (WPA) del Presidente estadounidense Franklin Delano Roosevelt. En 1946, el Departamento de Educación Pública de Puerto Rico contrató a Edwin Roskam y a Jack e Irene Delano, tres artistas de la WPA que trabajaban ya en la isla, para que capacitasen a otros artistas en la producción de películas, carteles serigráficos y libros ilustrados para una campaña en gran escala de educación sobre la salud y de alfabetización. Reflejo de la División de Educación de la Comunidad (Divedeco) en 1949, ese organismo administró un renombrado taller de grabado hasta su desaparición, en 1985.

Como las oportunidades para estudiar grabado en la isla eran escasas antes del establecimiento de la Divedeco, los principales artistas puertorriqueños de los años cincuenta, Lorenzo Homar, Rafael Tuñín, Antonio Maldonado y Carlos Raquel Rivera, estudian en el extranjero. Todos menos Rivera estudiaron con artistas mexicanos. Homar dio clases con Rufino Tamayo en 1946, en la escuela de arte del Brooklyn Museum. Tuñín y Maldonado se matricularon en la Academia de San Carlos, en Ciudad de México, donde estudiaron de 1947 a 1949 con Alfredo Zalce, de Taller de Gráfica Popular. Además, Homar, Tuñín y Maldonado orientaron dos talleres de grabado importantes: el Centro de Arte Puertorriqueño (1953-1952) y el Taller del Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña (1957-1958). Partidarios de la idea de que el arte debe tener significación social, los artistas vinculados con esos talleres crearon series de grabados que trataban sobre las condiciones sociales, políticas y económicas que enfrentaban los puertorriqueños a consecuencia de la modernización de la segunda posguerra mundial. Para poder crear grabados de gran calidad artística a precios razonables, dichos artistas adoptaron la técnica del grabado en linóleo, que promovía el Taller de Gráfica Popular.

Un grabado en linóleo de Tuñín de su serie de 1953 titulada Los casos de Ignacio y Santiago, muestra la influencia de la escuela mexicana. La imagen del jibaro que carga un pequeñito atáúd de madera alude a la alta tasa de mortalidad infantil, producto de la malnutrición, imperante en las zonas rurales de Puerto Rico. Su cara demacrada y sus manos hinchadas y marrones de tanto trabajo manual, denotan la influencia de David Alfaro Siqueiros, mientras que las gruesas líneas negras que le imponen a la imagen profundidad y un contraste marcado recuerdan el estilo de Arturo García Busto, del Taller de Gráfica Popular. Para 1958, ya los artistas puertorriqueños habían asimilado completamente las lecciones impartidas por el Taller de Gráfica Popular. Prueba de ello es el cartel Grabados Mexicanos, creado ese año por Homar para anunciar una exposición y ejecutado por él en el estilo de José Guadalupe Posada, el legendario grabador mexicano de principios del siglo.

En los años sesenta y setenta, los grabadores puertorriqueños vinculados con los talleres de la Divedeco y el Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña aprendieron su oficio de maestros como Homar y Tuñín. Aunque dedicados al tratamiento de temas puertorriqueños, ambos artistas alentaron a sus estudiantes a estudiar el arte mexicano. Antonio Martorell, el heredero manifiesto de Homar, trabajó de 1978 a 1984 en Ciudad de México, donde enseñó grabado y dibujo en La Esmeralda, una escuela de arte afiliada al Instituto de Bellas Artes. Su estupenda serie de 1983, Luto absoluto, es producto de su fructífero contacto con la cultura mexicana. Creada en honor de Toña la Negra, la cantante de boleros veracruzanos fallecida en 1982, Luto absoluto se inspiró en la iconografía del Día de los Muertos mexicano, con sus esqueletos que imitan el comportamiento humano. El airoso esqueleto que fuma un cigarillo representa al compositor Agustín Lara, de cuyas canciones fuera gran intérprete Toña la Negra.

Muchos artistas puertorriqueños que vivían en...
Nueva York en los decenios de 1960 y 1970 recuerdan haber estado más familiarizados con el arte mexicano que con el puertorriqueño. Ya para entonces, el muralismo mexicano formaba parte del canon modernista, mientras que los logros de los grabadores puertorriqueños eran prácticamente desconocidos fuera de los círculos latinoamericanos. El fomento posterior del arte puertorriqueño en los Estados Unidos, sumado a la institucionalización de la escuela mexicana, ha hecho que artistas latinos actuales, como James de la Vega, conocan ambos patrimonios. Este joven artista de ascendencia puertorriqueña, que en la actualidad vive en El Barrio (East Harlem), en Nueva York, ha realizado una serie de murales al aire libre con imágenes de esqueletos danzantes, que integran las tradiciones puertorriqueña y mexicana.

Mientras que muchos artistas puertorriqueños han tomado el arte mexicano como punto de partida, la mayoría de los artistas chicanos consideran a México su lugar de origen. Según la historiadora del arte Shifra M. Goldman, el movimiento de arte chino empezó a incorporar la iconografía del Taller de Gráfica Popular a raíz de la publicación de grabados de ese taller y de grabados de Posada en la portada de El Maltrato, el periódico