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Resumen: Este ensayo traza la carrera de Suzi Ferrer, comenzando con la que es su obra más temprana conocida y culminando con un breve estudio de la que la artista consideraba su obra más madura: una serie de instalaciones que produjo en la primera mitad de la década de 1970. Este cuerpo de trabajo se analiza a través del lente de arte pop proto-feminista, donde se puntualiza la sexualidad y el placer femenino. Ferrer, de manera similar a otras artistas Pop de su generación e imbuida en el movimiento de liberación sexual y el feminismo de la segunda ola, creó obras que subvirtieron el statu quo político y social.

Abstract: This essay maps Suzi Ferrer's career, beginning with her earliest known work and culminating with a brief study of a work that the artist considered her most mature: complex, immersive art installations she produced in the first half of the 1970s. This body of work is discussed through a proto-feminist Pop art lens, where female sexuality and pleasure are at the forefront. As with other female Pop artists of her generation, Ferrer created works that subverted the political and social status quo, which were influenced by the sexual liberation movement and the second-wave feminism.

Palabras clave: Suzi Ferrer, feminismo, arte pop, instalación, Puerto Rico, Melissa M. Ramos Borges

Keywords: Suzi Ferrer, feminism, Pop art, installation, Puerto Rico, Melissa M. Ramos Borges

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Lost and Found: Assessments of Suzi Ferrer's Decade-Long Career in Puerto Rico

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Suzi Ferrer (New York, 1940 - Los Angeles, 2006) had a short but prolific career in her two homes: New York and Puerto Rico. This essay maps her career, beginning with her earliest known work and culminating with a brief study of a work that the artist considered her most mature: complex, immersive art installations she produced in the first half of the 1970s. The following blueprint of Ferrer's life and career will be complemented with an analysis of her most important works, tracing her aesthetic evolution from a young New York student to a seminal Puerto Rican conceptual artist.

Ferrer's work is scarcely known today despite contemporary documentation in press interviews, art critic columns in local papers, and two publications in the late seventies. Her obscurity has presented a challenge for research: until recently, few local collectors have acquired her work, only one public institution preserves her work in its collection¹, and her archive is not publicly held. Unfortunately, Ferrer passed away in 2006, prior to the resurgence of the study of her work.² Furthermore, surviving press coverage is limited to small, black and white photographs of her work, or of the artist herself. Nonetheless, thanks to a serendipitous meeting with Ferrer's youngest child, Miguel, in early 2018, I was able to gain access to the artist's estate and the valuable archival material, such as artwork statements, preserved by the artist's family.³

This essay is divided in two parts. The first section traces her biography and reviews her earliest artistic production, a span of time that I will refer to as her symbolic abstraction period. In this phase, roughly the second half of the 1960s, Ferrer produced works with clear references to

modernist movements like DaDa, surrealism, as well as Jean Dubuffet's art brut aesthetic. The second section of the article will delve into the artist's mature work, produced in the first half of the 1970s. These works manifest a clear departure from her early ones and have a more contemporary approach to their production and conceptualization. In her mature work, Ferrer straddles between Pop, feminist and erotic art. In dialogue with female artists of her generation, she produced transgressive works which challenge the male gaze, confronts gender roles, celebrate female sexuality and subvert religious imagery.

Suzi Ferrer (néé Suzan Nudelman) was the oldest child of Ruth 'Toots' Epstein Susser, and Samuel 'Boomps' Nudelman, both second generation Austrian, Polish, Belarussian Jewish immigrants.⁴ Sasha, as her family called her, graduated from Jamaica High School, New York, in 1958, where she excelled and was active in the drama department. Her main interest was acting, and she hoped for a career in television. Nonetheless, her parents convinced her to study art and, in the summer of 1958, Nudelman enrolled in the Fine Arts program at Cornell University, where she graduated in 1962.⁵ During her years at Cornell, she also continued her exploration of acting, participating in various plays on campus, as well as a short stint on Broadway in *The Pajama Game* in 1959. She showed artwork in exhibitions at the Andrew Dickson White Art Museum (now Herbert F. Johnson Museum) and Franklin Gallery, both housed at the university campus. Unfortunately, no records of her contributions in these exhibitions survive.

After graduating, Sasha married Puerto Rican Miguel A. Ferrer, whom she met while he has studying his MBA at Cornell University. They moved to New York City, where he worked as an account executive at Merrill Lynch, Pierce, Fenner & Smith, Inc. They visited galleries and purchased contemporary art.⁶ The couple lived a nomadic life, traveling between New York and San Juan during the first years of their marriage. With their first born, Ilena, the Ferrers settled in Puerto Rico permanently by the mid-1960s. Miguel, who also dabbled in art making,

came from an affluent and culturally prominent family. His cousins were Oscar award winner actor José Ferrer and Rafael Ferrer⁷, *enfant terrible* of the local art scene. His uncle, Miguel Ferrer, was partner at the architectural firm Toro y Ferrer, responsible for many of San Juan's public modernist buildings, such as the Supreme Court, Department of Treasury, International Airport and Caribe Hilton. The Ferrers' close circle was made up of San Juan's cultural and economic elite, many of whom purchased Suzi's early works.

Arrival on the scene (1965-1970)

Susan delved into the Puerto Rican art scene seamlessly. Her earliest documented participation was a collective exhibition held in 1965 at the Campeche Gallery of Ateneo Puertorriqueño, one of the island's fundamental exhibition spaces in the second half of the twentieth century⁸. Surviving documentation of the exhibition does not record the work that Susan contributed. However, one of Susan's earliest surviving paintings dates to the same year: a small-format painting on Masonite board, 36" x 13", title forgotten, that reveals the artist's explorations of abstract expressionism at this time [1]. The painting's color palette is limited to three colors: terracotta, ivory-cream and black. The artist first coated



1. Suzi Ferrer. (Untitled), 1965, oil and enamel on Masonite, 36" x 13". Private collection, San Juan, P.R.

the Masonite with a flat application of terracotta. The second layer of paint, the ivory, was applied to the surface in a very gestural manner, almost mimicking the automatic drawing employed by Surrealists. These gestural brushstrokes yield an abstracted standing nude female figure; arms stretched out over her head, legs apart. She floats in an ocean of terracotta, with no horizon line, nor any other reference to 'ground' her. The last layer of paint is dripped over the surface: black paint is applied as a drizzling line over the female figure accentuating or delimiting her breasts, nipples and hair. Elsewhere, the black drippings produce curved and diagonal lines that create sense of whimsy and movement. With the text *de Ferrer 65*, Susan adopts her husband's surname, running along the inside of the right calf and knee.

In the early sixties, the local art market expanded, and commercial galleries sprang up in various locations in the Old San Juan area. This marked a critical shift, because until that point, exhibition venues and the art market were tied to cultural institutions like the Ateneo, the University of Puerto Rico's museum (MHAA) and the Institute of Puerto Rican Culture (ICP). The arrival of many new galleries changed the art scene in the island. Among them, La Casa del Arte (f. 1961) and Galería Colibrí (f. 1963) have been praised by art historians and artists as the most professional and significant in local art history.⁹ In her short career, Ferrer had three solo shows at La Casa del Arte and participated in various group shows at Galería Colibrí¹⁰.

Suzi's first solo show was at La Casa del Arte in 1966. At the time, the gallery was directed by Ketty Rodríguez, who helped and supported experimental avant-garde artists living and working in the Island. In San Juan, there was a longstanding tradition of promoting gallery exhibitions via silkscreen posters –or *carteles*—and Suzi's were produced by Lorenzo Homar, a local master graphic artist¹¹. Although the exhibition received press coverage from island wide distribution newspapers, *The San Juan Star* and *El Mundo*, the press clippings included scarce comments about the works themselves. Unfortunately for Suzi, her first solo exhibition came at a time

where no art critic was employed at either newspaper.¹² Nonetheless, the December 4th clipping in *The San Juan Star* did include black and white photographs of three of Ferrer's works: *Piggy*; *Soft Spoken Anarchist* and *Fantasiastically*, accompanied by a three-sentence text. The first one, a general panorama of the variety of mediums in display—oils, collages and silkscreens; the others were biographical commentaries. Ferrer's press coverage at *El Mundo* newspaper was no more thorough.¹³ In this case, the editorial published a portrait of the artist in front of a cropped image of her painting, *Soft Spoken Anarchist*; Ferrer poses at three quarters staring directly at the camera, and in a Michelangelo moment, the image captures the creator pointing to its creation [2].



2. Photograph of Suzi Ferrer opening night of her solo exhibition at La Casa del Arte, 1966. Digitalization *El Mundo*.

The Artist and His Conscience (1966) [3] takes a painterly approach, with enamel paint dripped over the textured and saturated surface. Other techniques, such as impasto brushstrokes and collage were also used in the creation of this piece. In several areas around the canvas, Ferrer intervened the amorphous drippings with fine lines drawn in black ink. Measuring 42 ½” x 47”, this rectangular painting has three large amorphous figures, located at the left, center and right side of the canvas. Each figure is freely formed and covered with drippings of ochre yellow, black, and brown enamel paint. On the upper right portion of the figure, Ferrer applied dark tones of blue-green, maroon, and black, whereas in the bottom half, earthy tones, like ochre and brown were used. The central figure, whose silhouette resembles a human torso, neck and face, is composed of a greenish grey color similar to the one used in the background. Various wiggling black, khaki and ochre lines were dripped over the figure. A thick intermittent red and white line circumscribes the right side. The figure on the left, which gives the impression of being in the foreground since it slightly overlaps the central figure, also takes a humanoid form. In this case, the figure’s head is covered with heavy, thick enamel paint drippings. At the painting’s center, Ferrer collaged a solid black rectangle with the words ‘when perfusion is vital’ printed in white in its upper right-hand corner. The title of this work, *The Artist and His Conscience*, likely references Sartre’s 1965 essay by the same title. By naming her artwork after a recent Sartre publication, Ferrer signals to her audience her own engagement with present literary and philosophical discourses. Being an avid reader, it is of no surprise that Ferrer references texts. Recent research has discovered that most of the titles of her works



3. Suzi Ferrer, *The Artist and His Conscience*, 1966, oil, enamel, and collage on canvas, 42 ½” x 47”. Private collection, San Juan, Puerto Rico.

produced during her symbolic abstraction phase were referenced books. Her reading ranged from metaphysics, surrealism, symbolism, philosophy and theory.

Notably two works, *Fantasiastically* (1965) and *American Standard* (1966), were significant outliers in the exhibition. From what can be gathered of the small black and white photograph published in *The San Juan Star* art section in 1966, *Fantasiastically*¹⁴ is figurative painting representing a table fan at the center of the composition with its blades whirling around frantically. Ferrer captures the sense of movement and dynamic of the everyday commercial appliance, a necessity in the island to combat the tropical weather.

With *American Standard*, Ferrer once again turned her eye to everyday objects. This monumental painting, 8' x 12' hung in her Condado¹⁵ apartment's living room for many years but is lost today. The artist depicts one of the home's most private spaces: the bathroom. Painting a wall-mounted sink, toilet, bidet, shelves and plumbing pipes, Ferrer plays with the idea of private made public, the scatological, all while nodding to Duchamp's *Fountain* (1917). The title of the painting, also the name of a multinational company dedicated to the manufacture of bathroom fixtures and plumbing supplies, could offer a commentary on USA international policies. At the time of the painting's creation, US troops had been involved in the Vietnam war for 10 years. During President Johnson's time in office, American military personnel in Vietnam dramatically increased to over half a million troops, thousands of casualties were reported back home, riots erupted in major cities while the country's right wing demanded stricter 'law and order' policies. The anti-draft, anti-war and the civil rights movement gained momentum, and the nation witnessed tragedies like Bloody Sunday and the assassination of Malcom X, both catastrophes in 1965. Does *American Standard* invite the viewer to explore the contradictions of the American government and its democracy? These works were important exploratory steps towards the Pop aesthetic that Ferrer would develop in the following decade.

The following year, Ferrer participated in the 6th edition of the IBEC Art Competition¹⁶. Established in 1947 by Nelson Rockefeller, the International Basic Economy Company (IBEC) arrived Puerto Rico during the mid-1950s, financing the construction of various strip malls, neighborhoods and supermarkets across the island (La IBEC tras 10 años 6). The company sponsored an annual art competition, with categories for oils, watercolors and drawings. In 1967 they introduced the graphic medium category. That year's jury—artist and professor Luis Hernández Cruz, gallerist Luiggi Marrozzini and painter José Oliver—selected Ferrer's monotype silkscreen *Nadja* (1966) as the winner in the graphics medium.¹⁷ This was no small victory because graphic art, particularly silkscreen, had long been the medium per excellence in Puerto Rico, because of the División de la Educación de la Comunidad (DivEdCo, f. 1949) workshops, where artists produced silkscreen posters for various cultural, educational purposes¹⁸. Furthermore, Ferrer's *Nadja*, deviates aesthetically from the established local norm of figurative, graphic, flat color and narrative pieces which reference Puerto Rican everyday life. A small, cropped white and black photograph in a newspaper article (1967) records the award-winning artwork. From what can be gathered from said photograph, the silkscreen monotype composition consisted of two humanoid forms --reminiscent of the anthropomorphic forms in *The Artist and His Conscience* discussed previously-- on a white background. Granting first prize to Ferrer's unusual imagery and her painterly approach to silkscreen medium over artists more in tune with the medium's local tradition must have been a radical decision.

Her first solo exhibition clearly evidenced a young artist who was still finding her own voice. Two years later, following her victory at the IBEC competition, she presented her second solo exhibition, again at La Casa del Arte¹⁹. Once again, Ferrer presented an amalgam of themes, aesthetics, literary and popular culture references in the pieces she displayed²⁰. *El Mundo's* art critic, Antonio J. Molina, wrote a short review Ferrer's work, where he stated:

Three years ago, I learned out about her work in this same gallery and I have to confess that in my opinion her work has not progressed. Lack of imagination in the composition of her 'collages' (most of her paintings also become 'collages') and the work that could be saved, she overloads them with a certain obsession against voids²¹. (Molina, Sobresalen serigrafías Susi Ferrer n.p.)

Not all of Molina's comments were so harsh: he praised her monotype silkscreens, a medium she had been working on since her IBEC competition days. Nonetheless, one cannot help but wonder if such a review played a prominent role in Ferrer's subsequent drastic change in her artistic endeavors.

In the following decade, Ferrer would set aside her paintbrushes and sharpened her abilities as a draftsman. The organic lines of her drippings became controlled contour lines in the experimental drawings which played an integral role in the installations she produced in the first half of the 1970s. Like many other female artists of the time, Ferrer's work became figurative, with deliberate vaginal and penile imagery, exploring female sexuality with intertwined Pop, erotic and feminist aesthetics and references. Sadly, this rich period in her art production was short lived. In the following section, I will explore this short, intense burst of feminist pop artmaking before Ferrer's departure to Los Angeles.

Ecstatic Bodies: Feminist Pop Art (1970-1975)

I did this before, dropping out. I went back to drawing the last time and I did that for a year and a half and arrived at my plexiglass, which is my most mature and best work.

- Suzi Ferrer, 1971 (as cited in Maldonado 23)

The breakthrough exhibition, *Seductive Subversion: Women Pop Artists, 1958-1968*²², curated by Sid Sachs in 2010, offered a necessary redemption for female artists associated with Pop Art, who had long been excluded from its formal history. Foremost, the exhibition debunked the popular myth that there were no women Pop artist. This mythology was reproduced in Puerto Rico, where artists like Joaquín Mercado and Carlos Irizarry are the island's face of the Pop art movement. Puerto Rican art historians could be forgiven for accepting this mythology; Suzi was at this time sole woman showing Pop art in Puerto Rico's professional art galleries.

Art historian Kalliopi Minioudaki's contribution to the *Seductive Subversion's* catalogue, "Pop Proto Feminisms: Beyond the Paradox of the Woman Pop Artist", proposes female Pop artists faced a double marginalization: the first one due to gender discrimination, and a masculinist art discourse and the second, neglect by feminist art theory, due to patriarchal artistic language. According to Minioudaki, female Pop artists dedicated much of their work to an issue feminist's forefront: female sexuality. Following Minioudaki's lead, in the following pages I will chart the second half of Ferrer's career within the feminist Pop landscape. Ferrer, like the Pop female artists in Minioudaki's study, "engaged in dialogue with pop culture, (re-)represented or (re-)imagined women's bodies, used their own, fashioned their personas, and spoke of female sexuality and pleasure" (Minioudaki 94).

In 1971 Ferrer had her third solo show at La Casa del Arte, a breakthrough exhibition titled *Plarotics*²³ [4], marking a certain departure from the works she had produced the decade before. The title of the exhibit was a compound word made from platonic and erotic, and Ferrer declared, "[...] the central theme is the conflict between society and self-liberation" (Ruiz de la Mata 10). A definite tour de force after an almost two-year hiatus from local exhibition halls, Ferrer presented several silkscreens, 48 drawings on paper, some drawings on plexiglass and a free-standing quadripartite plexiglass folding screen (Ruiz de la Mata 10).



4. *Plarotics* installation view at West Broadway Gallery, New York, 1973.
Image courtesy of the family of Suzi Ferrer.

Ferrer's imagery, medium and execution had completely changed. It is not completely clear what motivated these changes: her friendship with Puerto Rican artists who were creating works within Pop's artistic language, her kinship with experimental avant-garde artist Rafael Ferrer, her expanding art collection consisting of contemporary artists working in the New York art scene, the realization that Abstract Expressionism was the artistic language of her generation predecessors or all of the above. Her new body of work centered on the human figure drawn in acetate ink on plexiglass. The human form was flattened, simplified, and Pop-ified. The color palette was limited to the dark black ink and brownish washes in limited areas of the composition. As Ferrer abandoned Abstract Expressionism's interest in the universal, she marshalled Pop's

critiques of consumerism, generating accumulations of allusions dealing with stereotypes and specifics (Sachs 29). Plexiglass' transparency provided a visual image, an eloquent visual for said accumulations: images were designed to be overlaid by images in other panels. Ferrer's imagery had much in common with her contemporaries', Pauline Boty and Evelyne Axell, who: "Usurping, undermining and sabotaging the scopophilia of the (male) gaze, turning theirs on either on male or female bodies, [... they] systematically promulgated female desire" (Minioudaki 119). While Ferrer's anthropomorphic figures are selectively exaggerated, they also presented a joyful and impish tone, forcing the observer to confront their own prudish stereotypes about sex and desire.

In a candid and extensive interview by art critic Ernesto Jaime Ruiz de la Mata, published in *The San Juan Star* newspaper, Ferrer defended her use of naked male and female bodies:

It's a valid thing to use, and so I use it, but mostly I use the sex organs because of the actual configuration that they have. Something that is long, I develop even longer, even larger, because it fills up the space all right, and the breasts are marvelous, because otherwise you have a huge expanse of chest and nothing happening. You can do all sorts of things with the breasts. And the genitals are great. (Ruiz de la Mata 11)

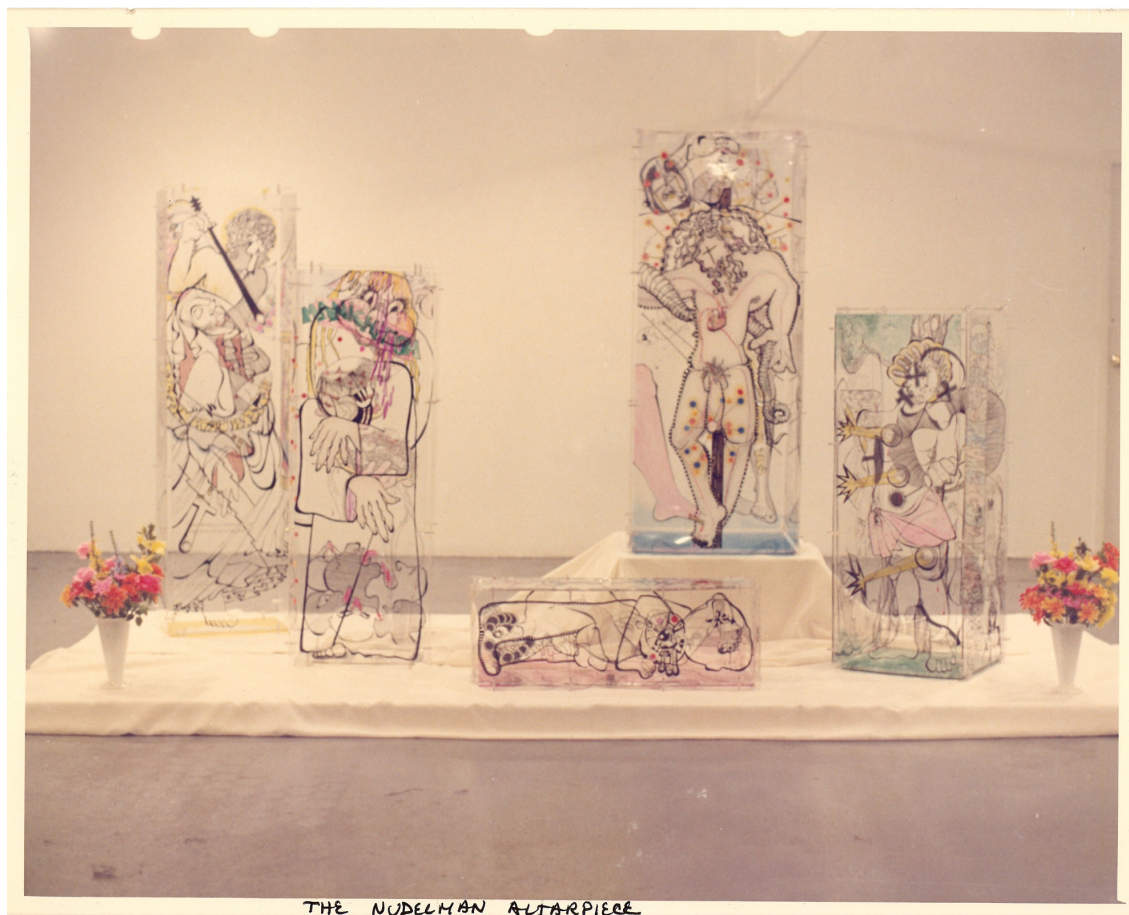
Ferrer's sly personality shines through in this interview --her drawings were not the only things pushing the boundaries of a mostly Catholic Puerto Rican society. Her comments also challenged stereotypes about societal conduct and sexual relationships. She revealed to Ruiz de la Mata her desire to swim naked in the beach, but that she felt restrained by local ideas of propriety (Ruiz de la Mata 11).

Although the critic praised the technical execution and conceptual prowess of *Plarotics*, Ruiz de la Mata was evidently enamored –or bewildered– by Ferrer’s physical attributes. His opening line states: “She has a charming personality, an equally attractive exterior and she is a sharp, articulate conversationalist, all which makes Suzi Ferrer an extraordinary personality in our art milieu” (Ruiz de la Mata 10).²⁴ Suffice to say, no other artist’s physical attributes in the island, male or female, were ever discussed in the published reviews of their exhibitions. Much like other female Pop artists, like Marisol, Pauline Boty and Niki de Saint Phalle, Ferrer fell into what art historian Sid Sachs coined ‘the beauty trap’. Sachs proposes that “[t]he attractiveness of these artists created a dilemma [...] a double standard that haunted these women [...] trapped by the superficial gaze of capitalist glamour” (Sachs 25). Ferrer’s physical beauty and style was often at a forefront in the reviews of her exhibitions.²⁵ Conscious of the effect her physical attributes had; Ferrer keenly weaponized her beauty.

Ruiz de la Mata’s interview is one of the first public documents which registers Ferrer’s creative process, conceptual references, artistic concerns and sexual liberation within Puerto Rican society. The *Plarotics* exhibition marked the first instance that the artist garnered extensive local press coverage. Whereas *The San Juan Star* interview emphasized the sexual content of Ferrer’s imagery, *El Nuevo Día*’s interview by *female* Cuban journalist and author Darcía Moretti delved beyond the erotic content of Ferrer’s new *oeuvre* considering the artist’s positionality as a woman creator. Ferrer candidly states:

If I were a man and painted the same thing, they would say, ‘*Oh, what a man ...*’ They wouldn’t talk about being daring or anything like that. I am a woman and I love men, but I find a certain prejudice against women [...] Men have always been allowed to define the crazy things that occur to them as art. In women, it is seen as a rare²⁶. (Moretti 10)

And it was rare, at least in the Puerto Rican art scene. The works of contemporary female artists were hardly as explicitly sexual. Take for example Cuban Zilia Sánchez (b. 1926), an artist living and working in Puerto Rico at the same time as Ferrer. Sánchez, who had exhibited a year before at the University Museum, produced undulating three dimensional canvases with a subdued and limited color palette. Cuban poet Severo Sarduy, who wrote the essay for Sanchez's exhibition catalogue, argued that even though her shaped canvases have an apparent influence of minimalist male artists of the time, Sanchez's works were a subtle metaphor for the skin, nudity and topography of the female body, and therefore inherently erotic (Sarduy n.p.). Whereas Sánchez refined, synthesized and abstracted the human body to a point of difficult recognition, Ferrer's female and males were overtly sexualized with exaggerated sexual organs.



5. *The Nudelman Altarpiece* installation view at West Broadway Gallery, New York, 1973. Image courtesy of the family of Suzi Ferrer.

In early 1973, Ferrer and New York based artists Sandra Gellis (b. 1940) and George Szekely opened a three-person show at WestBroadway Gallery²⁷ in New York. Ferrer exhibited a new piece, *The Nudelman Altarpiece* (1973) [5]. Once again, using plexiglass as her medium, Ferrer created her first fully immersive installation, which consisted of five rectangular prisms²⁸ placed over a white velvet covered platform. Bach's organ compositions played in a stereo turntable.

In her written proposal for *The Nudelman Altarpiece*, Ferrer stated: "My belief that the intense dedication to religious, specifically, Catholic ritual and idolworship [sic], is related to individual and mass sexual or libidinal repression in an inverse proportion, has led me to execute this work" (The Nudelman Altarpiece). Ferrer conceived of this piece as a critique of religious colonization, particularly Catholic, and the restrictions it imposed on human nature. Nonetheless, another intention is evident: an analysis of Catholic imagery and the contradicting discourses these images convey. Ferrer depicted Saint Theresa of Ávila, Saint Sebastian, Saint Anthony and crucified Christ, all inflicted with bodily harm vis a vis the commitment of their faith. Ferrer's saints' extremities and sexual organs are treated with the same exaggeration and elongation as her *Plarotics* figures.

From the turn of 1300 onward, Christian private devotion focused on the bodily suffering of Christ. Many medieval representations of

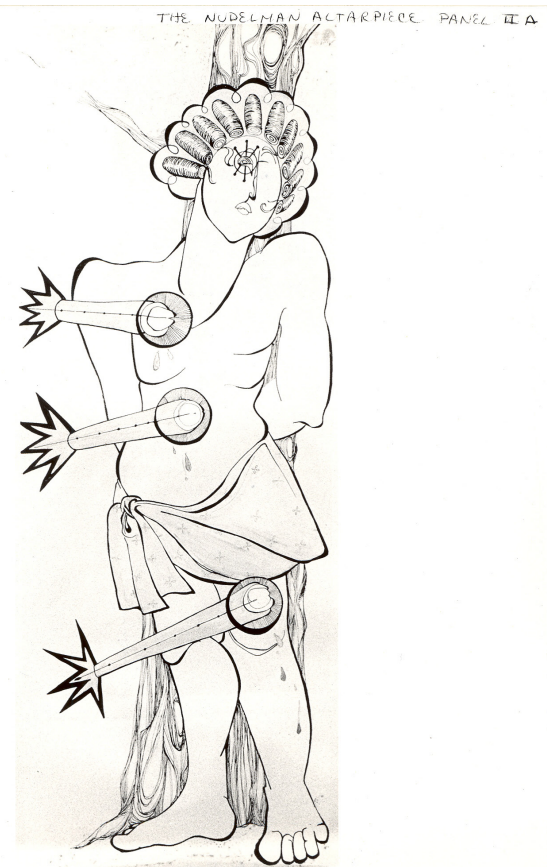


6. Suzi Ferrer, 'Saint Theresa panel', *The Nudelman Altarpiece*, 1973, acetate ink of plexiglass, 66" x 18". Image courtesy of the family of Suzi Ferrer.

Christ's side wound bore a compelling semblance to the female vagina, and interpretations of the spear entering Christ as vaginal penetration would later evolve into the erotized interpretations of Saint Theresa's mystic writings, or homoerotic readings of the arrows penetrating Saint Sebastian's flesh. These interpretations are hyperbolized in *The Nudelman Altarpiece*. Ferrer's Saint Theresa's pose [6] references Gian Lorenzo Bernini's Baroque marble sculpture, *The Ecstasy of Saint Theresa*, her body levitated, head back, ecstatic look in her face. Unlike Bernini's heavily-clad saint, Ferrer's reveals more skin. Saint Theresa grasps her bare breast in her right hand, sexualizing the mystic's already erotized body.

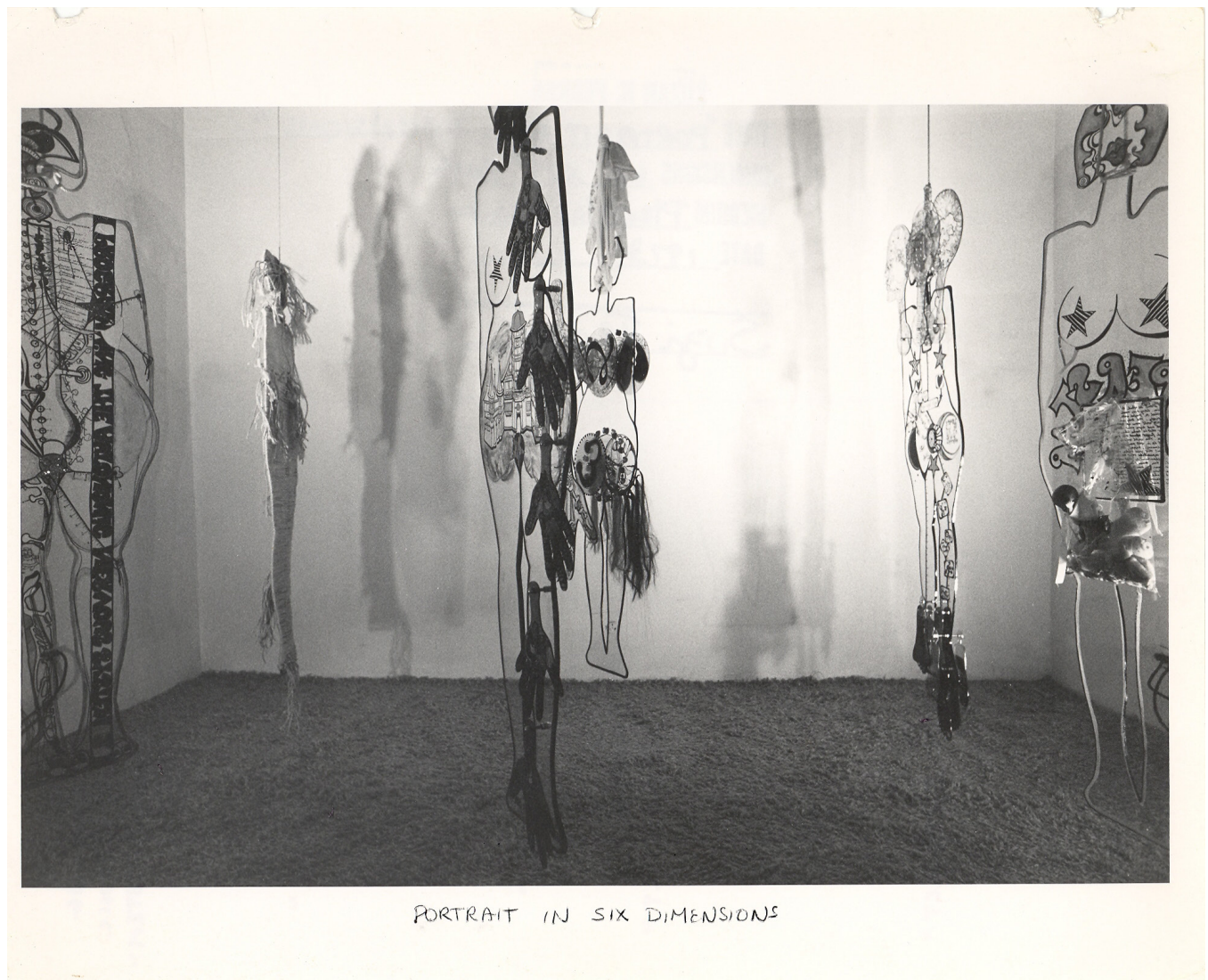
Ferrer's representation of Saint Sebastian's [7] martyrdom is embellished as well. Mostly undressed, the artist presents an image of both parodic and erotic indulgence. In keeping with Catholic iconography, Ferrer poses the Roman soldier tied to a tree. The arrows that were to be his torture are transformed to phallus-shaped comets that perforate his skin, staging a confrontation between the Catholic condemnation of homosexuality and the homoerotic undertones of the church's narratives.

That same year, Ferrer exhibited one of her most unsettling works, *Portrait in Six Dimensions* [8], an immersive installation that addressed gender roles in a patriarchal



7. Suzi Ferrer, 'Saint Sebastian panel', *The Nudelman Altarpiece*, 1973, acetate ink of plexiglass, 48" x 18". Image courtesy of the family of Suzi Ferrer.

society. The piece was presented in the recently renovated Galería Colibrí on Cristo Street in Old San Juan, as part of *PRIMAVERA* (Spring), the first installation collective exhibition in the island, curated by longtime Colibrí director Luigi Marrozzini ²⁹. The artists did not consider themselves a group, but rather friends and colleagues who shared certain positions on art. Each one created a piece that invaded the exhibition space. Carlos Irizarry, Joaquín Mercado, Domingo López de Victoria and Jeffrey Leder exhibited their works on the first floor of the building, while Suzi Ferrer and Domingo García presented theirs on second floor.



8. *Portrait in Six Dimensions* installation view at Galería Colibrí, San Juan, 1973.
Image courtesy of the family of Suzi Ferrer.

Ferrer's exhibition space was a rectangular room. Six female figures made of transparent plexiglass sheet hung from the high ceiling, resembling lifeless bodies with nooses around their necks. Ferrer dramatically illuminated the space, placing spotlights to light the pieces from the bottom up, thus creating a variety of shadows of the inert bodies on the walls. Burlesque music flooded the space. Hung like carcasses in a meat locker, Ferrer's flat figures transform into individual slices of a dissected female.

Ferrer arranged the female figures in two rows and three columns, thereby achieving an overlap of the different elements drawn, a concept she had been exploring since *Plarotics*. In this piece "[...] the six dolls of transparent plexiglass and painted differently like the six dimensions of a woman. The work deals with the way the people see a woman. This woman represents the roles that society expects woman [sic] to fulfill" (J. Fernández 15). She proposes that a woman cannot be understood from a single point of view, but is a kaleidoscope, since her experiences and her life stages compose a complex portrait of womanhood. *Portrait in Six Dimensions* was the first installation in Puerto Rico rooted in women's liberation movement and feminist literature, as Ferrer herself stated: "My work is strong toward women's lib" (J. Fernández 15).

Ferrer's figures were cut from the same template, with pronounced shoulders, arms at the sides, hands behind the hips, poorly defined faces, voluminous breasts and wide hips. The silhouette is reminiscent of the paleolithic *Woman of Dolní Věstonice* (discovered in 1925), therefore, it can be understood that Ferrer appropriates early concepts of feminine ideal to create her template.³⁰ Ferrer accentuates the silhouette of the body by delimiting it with a contour line made with an acetate ink, and, like tattoos, draws curvilinear abstractions, symbols, numbers and words. Although each template was intervened individually, they share some features: the eyes are omitted, all have full lips, and the areolas and pubis are covered with stars simulating the nipple pasties originally used by burlesque dancers at the beginning of the 20th century

in the cabarets of Paris to comply with the regulations that prohibited showing the breasts in their entirety in a public domain. In the United States, fifty years later, the female body was still censored; fashion magazines used pasties to cover the areola of the photographed models and Hollywood produced images of actresses using negligées with pasties. Ferrer's incorporation of the 'star-shaped cover-up' over the vulva and nipples is a direct commentary about censorship and, in turn, to the objectification of the female body. (Ramos Borges, *Unos comentarios en torno a la obra experimental de Suzi Ferrer* n.p.)

In keeping with the true nature of installation art, Ferrer forces the viewer to penetrate the space, to walk through it among the lifeless bodies, to see themselves reflected on the surface, as well as the possibility to be able to see others through it. Ferrer implicates the visitor as an accomplice in the massacre that surrounds them. It was precisely during this moment in Ferrer's artistic career in Puerto Rico that the woman's body would become a battlefield between State and the women's liberation movement: the rebellion against bras, free access to contraceptives, the abortion reform, among others. Female inequality had become a hot-button issue, worsened by the fact that the Comisión del Gobernador sobre el Estatus de la Mujer (1968-1970) denied that there was discrimination against women (Crespo Kebler 41). By the early 1970s, numerous female professional groups began to take shape, discussing the issues of social inequality in a patriarchal society. Through monthly gatherings, publications and public forums --including Gloria Steinem's 1971 conference in Puerto Rico-- they were able to bring into the public sphere issues that women faced in contemporary Puerto Rican society (Aguilar-Dornelles 100).³¹ Ferrer's work came about during the genesis of the feminist movement in Puerto Rico³².

The six female figures in Ferrer's *Portrait in Six Dimensions*, 'Programming the Nervous Autonomic System', 'The Housewife', 'Maternity', 'The Intellect', 'The Lover – Sex Object', and 'Inhibition - Prohibition', reference the archetypal stereotypes of females and their roles in

society³³. Due to the complexity of the piece, comments will be limited to three of the six figures in Ferrer's work. For 'The Housewife' [9], the artist drew a hybrid structure, with clear architectural references to basilicas, capitols and palaces over the woman's belly. Although these structures could represent the 'bodies' that inhabit them, the church and/or morality, the state and/or the husband, it is evident that Ferrer refers to the debates in the public sphere about who can legislate on the private body. It cannot be forgotten that just a few months before presenting this piece, Roe v. Wade achieved the legalization of abortion, a victory for women as masters of their own bodies. Furthermore, as the archetype of the housewife implies in a patriarchal society, a woman is confined to the domestic sphere, forced to dedicate and immerse herself completely to housework. A victim of the daily housework routine, this woman's noose is an iron electrical cord (Molina, ¿Manifiesto feminista u obra de arte? 11A).

Distributed from 'The Housewife's' head to her toes, the artist places six hands cut out of red plexiglass, intervened with a series of drawings and words. A possible reference to gender violence, Ferrer questions the idea that not only were women recognized as men's property within marriage, but it was accepted that men had the right to transgress them as they saw fit. This particular figure is of great relevance to the Puerto Rico of today, were sixty femicides occurred in 2020.

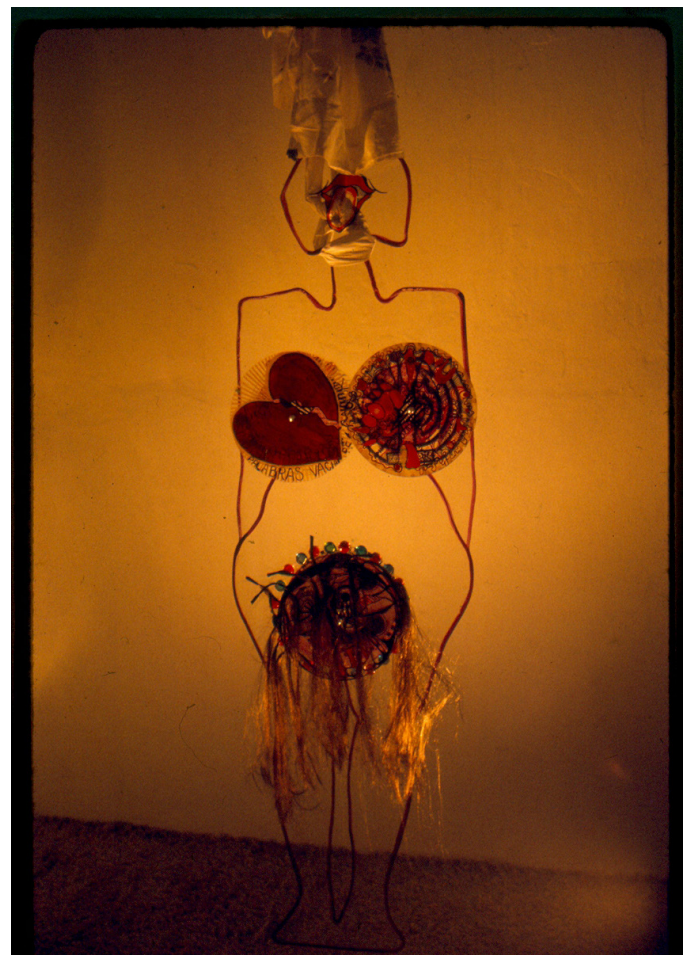


9. Suzi Ferrer, 'Housewife', *Portrait in Six Dimensions*, 1973, acetate ink on plexiglass, 60" x 19". Image courtesy of the family of Suzi Ferrer.

Numerous female and feminist organizations have raised concerns about the incrementing numbers of female victims to the point where in mid-September 2020, they asked the governor to declare a state of emergency. Their request fell upon deaf ears³⁴.

'The Lover-Sex Object's' [10] noose is a white sheet which partially covers the figure's face, but the viewer can discern that her mouth holds a phallic object between her lips. The obvious reference to fellatio "promulgate[s] active female desire and pleasure [...while it] radicalize[s] the consumption from the perspective of a woman" (Minioudaki 127). The white sheet/noose simultaneously references the site of the sex act—a bed—a space of both pleasure and violence. Here she makes manifest the popular word play *petite mort* a French term that allies sexual pleasure and death.

The figure's body is a product of assemblage: three circular acrylic roulette wheels spring forth from her breasts and pubis. The artist draws a broken heart on the right breast, an intricate pattern with words and symbols on her left one, while locks of long hair sprout from the pubic wheel, also intervened with elaborate illustrations. With this figure, Ferrer, in tune with other female Pop artists, dealt with the celebration of female sexuality and female pleasure³⁵. Yet, if 'Lover – Sex Object' is a confrontation of the male gaze and a



10. Suzi Ferrer, 'Lover-Sex Object', *Portrait in Six Dimensions*, 1973, acetate ink on plexiglass, 60" x 19". Image courtesy of the family of Suzi Ferrer.

promulgation of female sexuality, with 'Inhibitions-Prohibitions' [11], Ferrer creates an alarming metaphor for the female condition: the artist tightly wraps a rope around the entire female figure immobilizing, restraining and preventing it from experiencing any kind of sensation.

In his review, *¿Manifiesto feminista u obra de arte?*, art critic Antonio J. Molina, states:

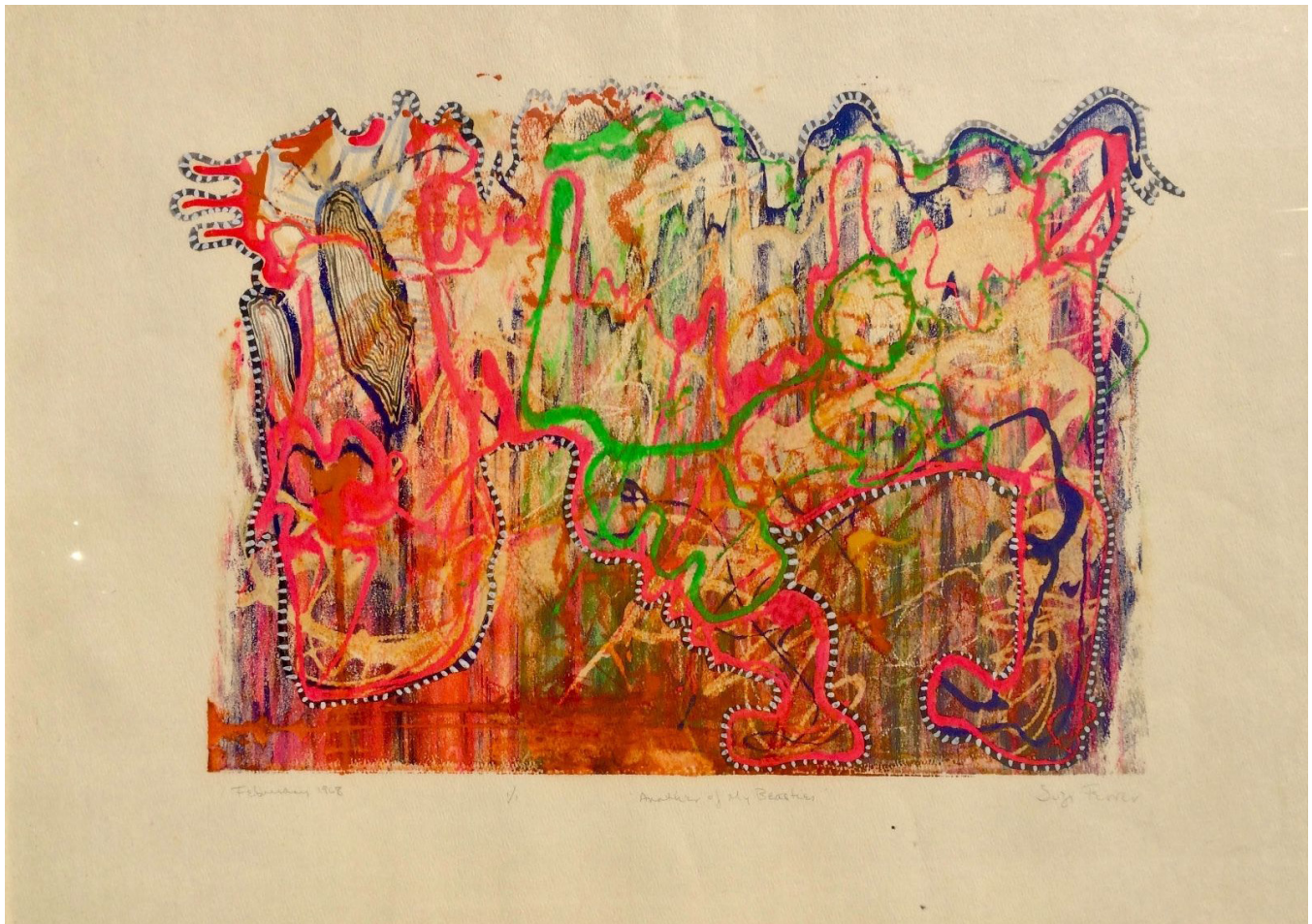
I have to emphasize the good technique used in the cutting of the sheets, the plastic, the careful and elaborate of the signs and manifestos, the good drawing, the color distribution, and above all, the originality and the intellectual and physical effort in creating these six figures, which speak to us of a new plastic language - controversial but never mediocre - and give the opportunity to other artists and the public in general, to establish, or rather, to resolve the dilemma between art or manifesto, or accept both, to applaud or condemn the 'courage' (or tolerance) of Luigi Marrozzini for representing her in his Colibrí Gallery³⁶. (Molina, *¿Manifiesto feminista u obra de arte?* 11A)

Although the *PRIMAVERA* exhibition received ample press coverage, from television shows to articles in all national newspapers and local magazines, Suzi Ferrer was the only artist who received an independent review of her work.



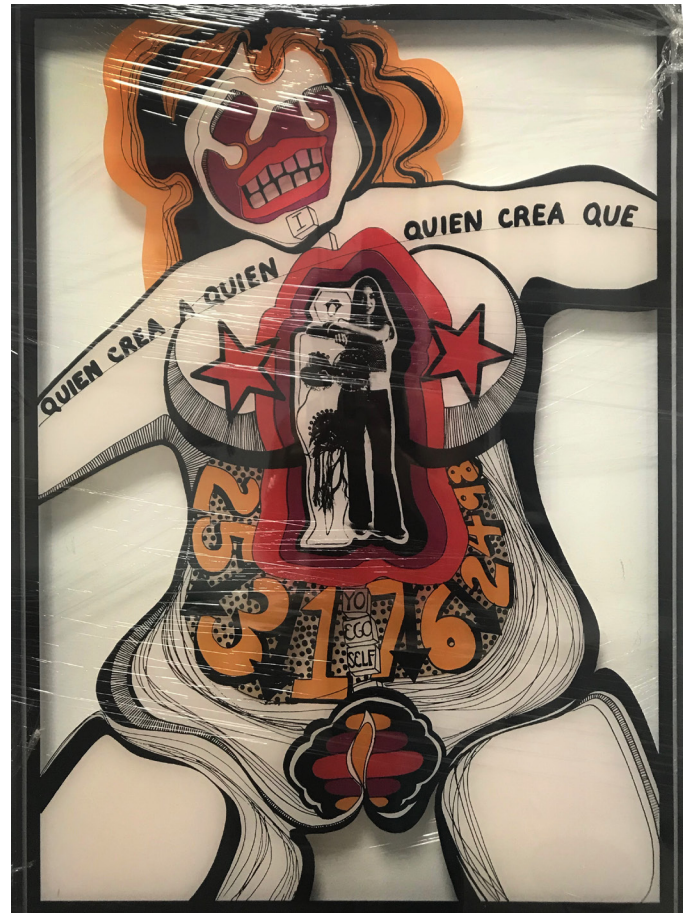
11. Suzi Ferrer, 'Inhibition-Prohibition', *Portrait in Six Dimensions*, 1973, rope on plexiglass, 60" x 19". Image courtesy of the family of Suzi Ferrer.

Ferrer began 1974 with her participation in the 3rd edition of the Bienal del Grabado Latinoamericano de San Juan (BSJ), where three of her silkscreens on plexiglass were exhibited³⁷. Like her installation work, her silkscreens from the 1970s also revealed a radical departure from her work of the previous decade. Her earlier works, like *Another of My Beasties* (1968) [12] evidences a painterly approach to the silkscreen medium, abstracted forms applied in translucent color layers, and afterwards intervened by Ferrer's ink drawings. Her 1974 silkscreens conform to her new Pop aesthetic: flat, solid colors giving the image a graphic quality while emphasizing seriality and reproducibility.



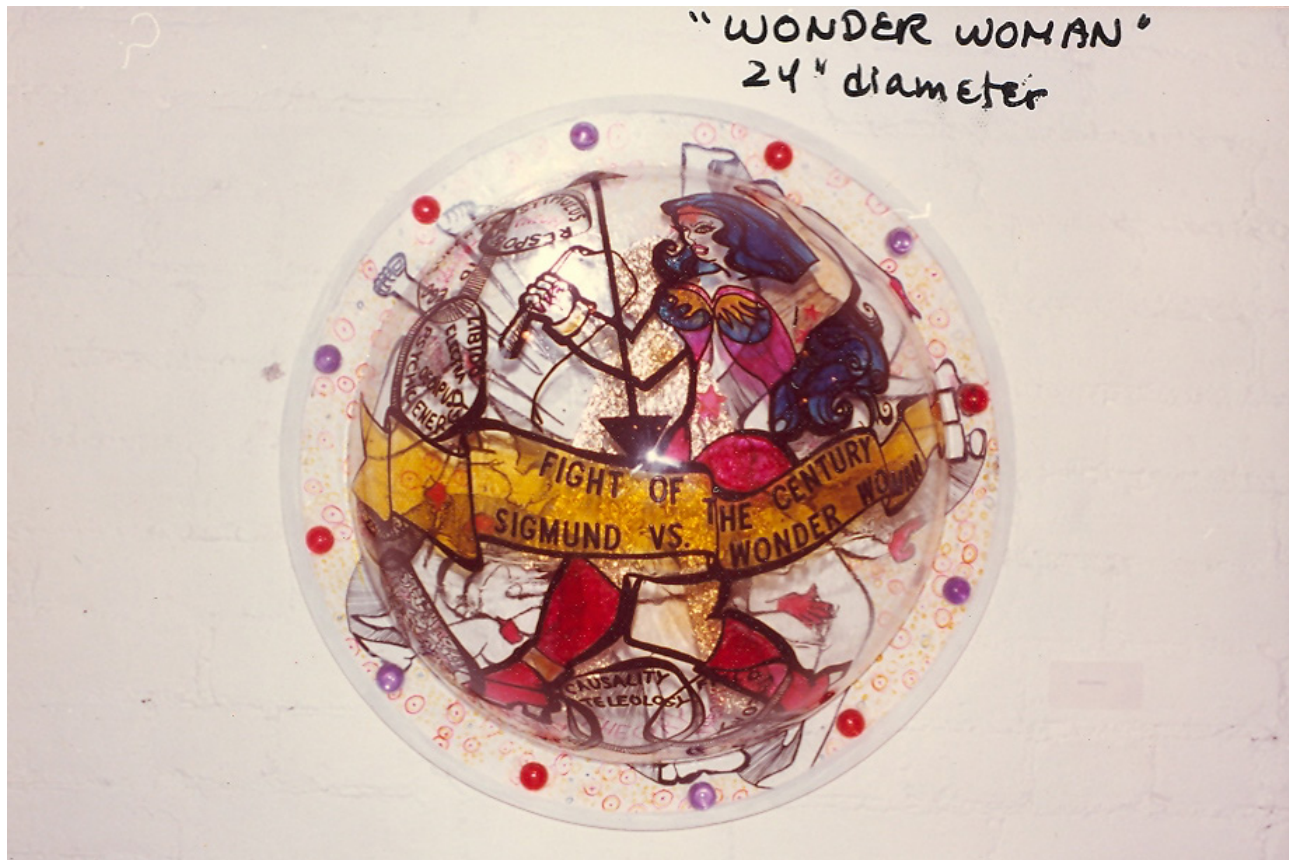
12. Suzi Ferrer, *Another of My Beasties*, 1968, silkscreen on paper. Private collection, USA.

In her *Auto retrato I* (1973) [13] Ferrer boldly proclaims Pop's artistic language. Ferrer presents two female bodies: the first is the amplified Pop body with voluptuous breasts, wide hips, flowing hair, areolas again covered by five-pointed stars; the second, a photographic image of the artist posing alongside her 'Lover - Sex Object'. This image, paired with the words "quien crea a quien | quien crea que" inscribed across her arms and torso, boldly proclaims Ferrer as proprietor and creator of her own multivalent image. Over her abdomen, the numbers 253162498, with the words 'yo-ego-self' placed in stacked cubes between the number 1 and 7. The inclusion of the words could allude to Freudian and Jungian theories of self-reference.



13. Suzi Ferrer, *Auto retrato I*, 1973, silkscreen on plexiglass, 31 7/8" x 24". Private collection, San Juan, Puerto Rico.

Ferrer participated in the 1974 *Artistas Puertorriqueñas*³⁸ exhibition, held at La Galería, where she presented *Wonder Woman* (1974) [14], an allusion to the condition of the woman in her time.³⁹ The artist places the superheroine Wonder Woman and a yellow banner at the center of the composition, which read: "Fight of the Century, Sigmund v. Wonder Woman". The piece explores the psychological concepts that shaped the heroine's personality and genesis, as well as the sexual implications of the visual representation of the demigoddess. Furthermore, by using a semi-spherical plexiglass support, its undulation and protuberance refer to the female body and alludes to the curvaceous superheroine figure.



14. Suzi Ferrer, *Wonder Woman*, 1973, silkscreen on plexiglass, 24" diam.
Image courtesy of the family of Suzi Ferrer.

Later in 1974, Ferrer participated in the inaugural exhibition of the Centro Nacional de Arte (CNA)⁴⁰. In *Juegos*⁴¹ [15], the artist examines competitive sports as mechanisms for the discharge of sexual and aggressive energies. Ferrer created ten male silhouettes cut from wood panels. The male figures were installed throughout the gallery, forcing the viewer to walk around the bodies. Ferrer described:

These men are but parodies of the sportsman, turning him into a narcissistic 'macho'. The competition is for self enhancement; exhibitionism and egocentricism are primary [...] The pose, the gesture, the physique, is the totality of these men. They are defined by their games. None is a portrait, but rather a generalization. (*Juegos*)

Each figure is posed to signify a specific sport: boxer, soccer player, karate fighter, weightlifter, referee, golfer, among others. The silhouettes are life-size, freestanding, numbered, named, with distorted limbs, and individually intervened with organic line drawings, numbers, words, and phrases. These figures are significantly less detailed than the “tattoos” designed for the females in her previous installations. By applying areas of solid color, prioritizing a graphic drawing technique, and employing a material which restricts the perception of depth, Ferrer might be emphasizing the flatness and one-dimensionality of the male role.



15. *Juegos* installation view at West Broadway Gallery, New York, 1975.
Image courtesy of the family of Suzi Ferrer.

In 1. *Referee Joaquín, Domingo, Carlos* [16], the male figure is standing upright, fully frontal with his arms slightly bent forward. A black contour line delineates the overall silhouette and is used for detailing its toes, knees, and fingers. His penis shaft is elongated, its tip reaching as far down as the figure's knee, and crowned with an arrow pointing upwards. Furthermore, similar to the 3D decoupage technique, the figure has a cut-out of his penis and placed several inches on top of the genital area. The man was baptized with the names of the fellow artists who Ferrer exhibited with in *PRIMAVERA*. Presented as the referees of this game, what are these colleagues arbitrating? Does Ferrer see them as unbiased or so immersed in the male competition that they are aware of all the rules, and can therefore call out on others? What are they gatekeepers of?

Ferrer's last recorded exhibition was in 1975. In that same year, she received her MA in Psychology and she uprooted her life and moved to California with her two children. As a single mother of two, she needed to provide for her family, and since art was not a lucrative endeavor at the time, she turned to the entertainment industry. She had had previous



16. Suzi Ferrer, 'Referee', *Juegos*, 1975, ink on wood panel, 72" x 24" x 3/4". Image courtesy of the family of Suzi Ferrer.

jobs producing segments for several television shows at the beginning of the decade. In Los Angeles, she excelled in script writing and production⁴² until her premature death in 2006.

There are several reasons why Suzi Ferrer's artistic career has not yet been the subject of a critical study. First, and frankly, most critically, there hasn't been a comprehensive historization of Puerto Rican contemporary art. This author's 2019 PhD dissertation from the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid offers one of the first major frameworks for situating Ferrer's work within a broader constellation of Puerto Rican experimental artists of the 1960s-1970s. Secondly, institutional misogyny has especially marginalized female artists of this time period. Third, Ferrer doesn't fit comfortably in Puerto Rico: she was born in New York, produced a Puerto Rican body of work that was inherently critical of the Puerto Rican society around her, and then she left, returning to the United States. Finally, Suzi's story doesn't conform to our expectations. The traditional art history narratives usually conclude with the death of the artist, whereas in this case, Ferrer ceases making art at her apex to provide for her family. This author's recent discovery of Ferrer's archive has made possible in-depth and rigorous reassessment of Ferrer's short lived and intense artistic career. Audiences will soon have the opportunity to learn more about Ferrer and the place she briefly held in San Juan's avant-garde art community, in her first retrospective exhibition to be held at the Museo de Arte y Diseño de Miramar in fall 2021.

Endnotes

1. The Institute of Puerto Rican Culture (ICP, by its acronym in Spanish) has four works by Ferrer in their collection. These are titled: *Depending Upon a Complete Disregard for a Contest* (1967, watercolor); *Oedipus* (not dated, silkscreen monotype); *Ream Clean* (1970, silkscreen) and *Oh, Sensuous Woman, Oh* (1970, silkscreen).
2. The first resurgence of Ferrer's work was back in 2008, at Galería Pintadera in San Juan, Puerto Rico. Under the co-direction of Adalberto and Robert Hernández, Ferrer's work was included the second edition of *De colección: Pinturas y creaciones artísticas de arte puertorriqueño del s. XX*. All were purchased by local collectors and art aficionados. This author's PhD dissertation discusses Ferrer's work within the experimental avant-garde art movement in Puerto Rico. See Melissa M. Ramos Borges. *Omisión o censura: Una revisión de la vanguardia artística en Puerto Rico, 1960-1970*. 2019, Universidad Autónoma de Madrid. PhD dissertation. This author is curating the upcoming Suzi Ferrer retrospective exhibition at the Museo de Arte y Diseño de Miramar (MADMi). One of the author's former students and research assistant, presented her undergraduate thesis in the Art History Program. See Aisha Pérez González. *Arte, vanguardia y feminismo: Vida y obra de Suzi Ferrer*. 2018. Universidad de Puerto Rico, Recinto de Río Piedras, BA thesis.
3. Miguel has assumed the role of archivist and conservator of Ferrer's estate. He has digitalized and organized Ferrer's documents and slides registering her work. Furthermore, he created a webpage, making public her work and writings, in an attempt to maintain his mother's legacy alive. Since 2018 he has been sharing valuable information with the author. Without his help, this investigation would not have been possible.
4. Both parents were musically talented, Toots played the piano and Booms sang in a professional choir. Mr. Nudelman was a businessman, who, along with his brother, owned three paint and hardware stores in New York, called Liberty Paints. Suzi has a younger brother, Chester, who lives in Seattle, Washington.
5. Various faculty members during Ferrer's college education, such as Norman Daly, Kenneth Evett and Jack Squier, among others, were artists with a clear modernist, cubist and abstract influence in their work.
6. In 2013, a small John Chamberlain sculpture was auctioned in Sotheby's, which was purchased by the Ferrers in the 1960s. See <https://www.sothebys.com/de/auctions/ecatalogue/2013/may-2013-contemporary-day-n08992/lot.303.html>
7. Rafael Ferrer was a key figure in the avant-garde art scene in Puerto Rico. See Deborah Cullen. *Rafael Ferrer (A Ver)*. Los Angeles: Chicano Studies Research Center, 2012.

8. Founded in 1876 by the creole elite, the Ateneo became the first college-level educational institution. During the 1930s, it became the place where local intellectuals defended a national identity and defended a Hispanic continuity in the Antilles. The Ateneo was one of the oldest cultural institutions in Puerto Rico. It has a history of being the first institution to validate artistic creation in the island, organizing competitions in various artistic disciplines since 1877. Nonetheless, it was not until the 1940s, under the directorship of artist Luisa Géigel, that the Ateneo's gallery was reformed with an active exhibition calendar, offering the public new exhibitions every two weeks. See María Elba Torres Muñoz, *Historia social y cultural de la circulación de las artes en Puerto Rico (1900- 1950)*. 2009, Centro de Estudios Avanzados de Puerto Rico y el Caribe, PhD dissertation.

9. Other galleries that opened in the Old San Juan area was the short lived Galería Sol, which exclusively presented abstract works (1963-1964), Galería Isla (1963-1968); Galería Santiago (1965-1977?) and Galería 63 (1966-1967). Both Galería Sol and Galería 63 were artist-run galleries, spearheaded by Luis Hernández Cruz and Carlos Irizarry, respectively.

10. Not only was Ferrer's work included in various collective shows at Galería Colibrí, but her silkscreens *Ream Clean* (1971) and *Oh, Sensuous Woman, Oh* (1971) were also included in the Portafolio de Gráfica de Puerto Rico. This graphic portfolio was produced at the Colibrí print workshop and included the work of: José Alicea, Alfonso Arana, Salvador Benítez, Arturo Bourasseau, Avilio Cajigas, Luis Cajigas, Domingo García, Natividad Gutiérrez, Gilberto Hernández, Luis Hernández Cruz, Carlos Irizarry, Domingo López de Victoria, Rafael López del Campo, Augusto Marín, Manuel Hernández Acevedo, Joaquín Mercado, Julio Micheli, Luis Muñoz Lee, Jorge Rechany, Fernando Rivero, José Luis Rochet, Rafael Tufiño Sr., Rafael Tufiño Jr. and Marcos Irizarry.

Ferrer's *Ream Clean* and *Oh, Sensuous Woman, Oh* were exhibited in various graphic shows, such as: II Bienal de San Juan (ICP, 1972); Puerto Rican Prints at Exxon Collection (traveling exhibit, 1973); Gráfica Puertorriqueña (Galería Colibrí, 1973); XII Bienal de Sao Paulo (1973); Colectiva Gráfica Lationamericana (MHAA, 1976). Almost half a century after its last exhibition at local cultural institution, Ferrer's *Oh, Sensuous Woman, Oh* was included in the 2020 collective exhibition *Dialéctica y anarquía en el deseo: Géneros y marginalidad en Puerto Rico*, at the Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Puerto Rico, curated by artist Raquel Torres Arzola.

11. Suzi had met Homar back in early 1966 when she participated in a workshop 'Experimentos serigráficos' at the silkscreen atelier of the ICP. She was the only female artist who participated in the exhibition, and she did so under her maiden name, Suzan Nudelman.

12. Although *The San Juan Star*, an English language periodical founded in 1959, had an art critic, William Overbey, he had left the position in January 1966. It wasn't until late 1967 that the newspaper hired a new art critic, Ernesto Jaime Ruiz de la Mata.

13. In the fifties and sixties, *El Mundo* included some articles about exhibitions in its entertainment section, sparse writings that contained general information of the exhibited works and a short biography of the artist. It wasn't until 1968, that *El Mundo* hired Antonio J. Molina, a Cuban artist exiled in the island, as art critic for the newspaper.

14. According to Ferrer's record book, this piece was acquired by a collector from Puerto Rico.

15. Condado is an affluent, beach front neighborhood in the San Juan municipality.

16. Since 1962, the company sponsored an annual art contest for professional and amateur artists, whose jurors were mostly renowned local artists. In 1966 Ferrer participated in the 5th edition of the IBEC competition, although the works she submitted for the show are not known. Entries were exhibited at Villa Blanca Shopping Center in the Caguas municipality and at the Universidad de Puerto Rico, Río Piedras Campus División de Extensión gallery.

17. Other winners included: Olga Albizu (oils), Carmelo Fontánez (watercolor) and Tomás A. Rosa (drawing).

18. Similar to the workshop-school dynamics that emerged in DivEdCo, in 1957, the ICP founded the sculpture workshop, under the direction of the Spaniard Francisco "Compostela" Vázquez Díaz. This workshop, like others, fulfilled a double purpose: a didactic one in which the disciples learned art techniques, and the other as a restoration workshop for the objects Alegría acquired for the ICP collection. In addition, the silkscreen workshop, under the direction and supervision of Lorenzo Homar, designed and executed silkscreen posters (carteles) for the numerous cultural activities sponsored by the ICP, as well as commemorative posters of national heroes. Homar's disciples learned the valuable lesson of producing high-quality works, both in design and technique.

19. According to the artist's records she exhibited: *Some Dumb Grownup Joke I Guess; The Christmas Gift; Generalissimo S.A.; Interpretation of Gay Individualism; That for Which I Am Thirsting; Universal Jacks and Jills Remember Who Spoke Third; Dilapidated Fiduciary; Ragged Remnants of a Tearful Pristine Soul; After the Saran Wrap Caper; Once I Was the Creator of a Non-Political Demi-Crisis; Mother Scotchers; Rainy Pastime; Petunia; Make One, and the silkscreens: A Temporal Sort of Silver Fragility; No News From Home; Stepping To Different Drummers; Me Overlapping I; One or Another of My Favorite Animals; The ID, The Ego and the Superego; Omnivorous Doubt; A Thinker Who Must Now Despise Men; God is the Middle Term; Arrest, In Transcendence; The 67th Status Symbol; Gem Stainers; A Fixes Base of Moral Integrity; Thou Shalt Love The Crowd; Rasmanjari; Shara Pradipa; Another of My Beasties; Narcissistic Female Type; Ratira Hasya; Depending Upon a Complete Disregard for Context; Kiss Me Quick Types; Primroses and Petticoats; Oedipus; El General; Suzi's Dreamables; Half the Meaning Lies Beneath the Surface; Homage to Jacques Cousteau; A Bird Can Fly But Can A Fly Bird?; Six Windows of My Minds; Plastic Perusal; Chemistry; Tuned to Another Channel;*

Patrons of the House; and *The Day of the Teddy Bears Funeral*.

20. Most of the works exhibited at her first solo show in La Casa del Arte, would be shown once again, a year later, at the Museo de Arte de Ponce (MAP), in a four-person collective with artists Harold Jacobs, Robert Koffler and Mario Torroella. Even though Mario Torroella is not included in the exhibition silkscreen poster, he participated in the show, probably as a last-minute addition to the roster. *El Día* newspaper, then a regional periodical owned by Luis A. Ferré, founder of the MAP, published a short article, which included the biography of the four artists. For further information, see: Presentan obras 4 artistas, *El Día*, December 12, 1967, pp. 4; 17.

21. Author's translation. "Hace tres años conocí su trabajo en esta misma galería y tengo que confesar que a mi juicio su trabajo no ha progresado. Falta de imaginación en la composición de sus 'collages' (la mayoría de sus pinturas también se convierten en 'collages') y la obra que alguna vez puede salvarse ella la recarga, con cierta obsesión contra los vacíos."

22. The exhibition was a traveling show held in the following venues: University of the Arts, Pennsylvania; Sheldon Museum of Art, Nebraska; Brooklyn Museum, New York, and Tufts University Art Gallery, Massachusetts.

23. *Plarotics* was also exhibited at the IX Biennale International D'Art Menton, France (1972) and at WestBroadway Gallery (1973).

24. It was not the first time Ferrer's physical appearance was prioritized over her work. Back in 1967 art critic Jay Jacobs visited the island and published a now infamous article in the December issue of the *ARTgallery Magazine*. His comments about Ferrer were "[...] a talented but immature collagist who has yet to produce a piece as good looking as the one engineered by her parents" (26). She was in fact a beautiful woman. She was runner up in the Miss New York State pageant in 1958, and after her divorce in 1973, took up modeling, appearing in several TV and print media commercials.

25. Her glamour and style did not go unnoticed either, she was twice selected as one of the Best Dressed Women in the Island, 1968 and 1969. See Penny Maldonado. "Suzi Ferrer." *The San Juan Star*, 7 December 1968, p. S-8; Penny Maldonado. "Best Dressed Women Honored at a Cocktail Party." *The San Juan Star*, 19 December 1968, pp. 64-65; Penny Maldonado. "Best Dressed Women Honored on their Night." *The San Juan Star*, 14 December 1969, pp. 56-57.

26. Emphasis by Moretti. Translation by the author. "Si yo fuera hombre y pintara lo mismo, dirían: 'Ah, que hombre...' No hablarían de ser atrevido ni nada de eso. Yo soy mujer y me encantan los hombres, pero encuentro cierto perjuicio en contra de la mujer [...] Al hombre siempre se le ha permitido expresar las locuras que se le ocurren usar como arte. En la mujer se ve como una cosa rara."

27. WestBroadway Gallery was a cooperative exhibition hall founded in 1972 by students of Justin Schorr, an artist professor working at Columbia University. It had prime real estate location in Greenwich Village, next to Leo Castelli Gallery, Ok Harris and Nancy Hoffman Gallery, and was known for their experimental artists, like Saundra Gellis, George Szekely, French Wallace, Richard Gaffney, Gerald Ferstman, W. Caravan Walker, among others. Its shows were reviewed by mayor publications, such as ArtForum. It closed its doors a decade later.

28. All the six panels that made up each prism were in some way intervened by the artist.

29. Although both the poster and the invitation to the exhibition mentioned four artists, Suzi Ferrer and Domingo García were later included in the roster. It must be noted that Ferrer's first exhibition at Galería Colibrí was during the spring of 1966, where she participated in the collective exhibition *Experimentos serigráficos del Taller ICP*. See footnote 8.

30. Made between 23,000 and 25,000 years ago, the statuettes have been found in different places around Europe. Since their discovery at the end of the 19th century, they were baptized with the name "Venus". This denomination carried implications that were made as representations of the ideal of femininity and feminine beauty and associated with the myth of the goddess woman or fertility amulets.

31. Groups such as Sociedad de Mujeres Periodistas, Mujer Intégrate Ahora (MIA), Federación de Mujeres Puertorriqueñas (FMP) Alianza Feminista por la Liberación Humana (AFLH) fought for legislature reform, labor laws, and sexual violence laws, while denouncing heteronormativity. The MIA published six numbers of the monthly magazine *El tacón de la chanqueta* (1974-1975). Another publication with a feminist lens was *Ángela Luisa*, published from 1967 to 1981 and edited by news reporter Ángela Luisa Torregrosa. See Ana Irma Rivera Lassen & Elizabeth Crespo Kebler, editors. *Documentos del feminismo en Puerto Rico: Facsímiles de la historia Volumen I 1970-1979*. Editorial de la Universidad de Puerto Rico, 2010.

32. Although, until the moment, the degree of Ferrer's involvement with the local feminist movement is unknown, one of her works, *Juegos* (1974) was featured in *El tacón de la chanqueta* magazine. See "Actividades." *El tacón de la chanqueta*, vol. 1, no. 2, February 1975, pp. 16.

33. In a 2019 conference, I argued that Ferrer's *Portrait in Six Dimensions* referenced the revolutionary text *The Second Sex* by French philosopher Simone de Beauvoir, which became the pillar of feminist theory and helped contextualize the women's liberation struggle. With the revolutionary statement "you are not born a woman, you become one", Beauvoir analyzes woman as a socially constructed cultural concept, undertaking a scientific, historical and mythological revision to understand the conditions that built this alterity. See Melissa M. Ramos Borges, "Unos comentarios en torno a la obra experimental de Suzi Ferrer." VIII Coloquio de investigación de historia de las mujeres: Mujer en las artes, Universidad de Puerto Rico, Recinto de Utuado, Asociación Puertorriqueña de Investigación de Historia de las Mujeres, 20 May 2019.

34. The panorama changed on January 24, 2021. Four months after their initial request, recently elected governor, Pedro Pierluisi, declared a state of emergency for gender violence, just five days after Angie Noemí González was brutally murdered by her husband. The new executive order expires on June 30, 2022.

35. Such as Marisol, Pauline Boty, Evelyne Axel, Lee Lonzano, Niki de Saint Phalle, among others.

36. Translation by the author. “Tengo que hacer resaltar la buena técnica utilizada en el corte de las planchas, del plástico, lo cuidadoso y elaborado de los letreros y manifiestos, el buen dibujo, la distribución del color, y sobretodo la originalidad y el esfuerzo intelectual y físico en crear estas seis figuras, que nos hablan de un nuevo lenguaje plástico –polémico pero nunca mediocre—y dan oportunidad a otro artistas y al público en general, a establecer, o mejor dicho, a resolver la disyuntiva entre arte o manifiesto, o aceptar ambas cosas, a aplaudir o censurar la ‘valentía’ (o la tolerancia) de Luigi Marrozzini al representarlo en su Galería Colibrí.”

37. These were: *Captain America*, *Auto retrato I* and *Auto retrato II*.

38. It displayed a selection of small format drawings and graphics by other female artists, such as Consuelo Claudio, Maritza Dávila, Gloria Florit, Susana Herrera, Isaura Mergal, Ángeles Molina, Doris Pérez, María E. Somoza and Josefina González.

39. It must be noted, Ferrer developed a superhero series, working of images appropriated from the Superman and Captain America comics.

40. Spearheaded by friend and artist Carlos Irizarry, the National Center for the Arts (CNA) was a collective and community workshop-school space integrating new artistic media. Capuchin Order monks provided them the use of a building located in the Callejón de la Capilla in Old San Juan. CNA had 14 specialized workshops: painting, photo-silkscreen, cinematography, theater, music and crafts. It also had an exhibition space, Galería Guaraguao, initially directed by artist Heriberto González, and later by artist Elí Barreto. The opening activities included a month-long program with exhibitions, theatrical presentations, dance, music and film screenings.

41. *Juegos* was also exhibited at WestBroadway Gallery in February of 1975. Ferrer’s work shared the gallery space with those by Wallace French.

42. She produced the film “Destined to Live” which documented the recoveries of 100 women with breast cancer. In 1989 it was nominated for an Emmy and won the prestigious Humanitas Award. Ferrer herself died of breast cancer.

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