

Miguel Luciano

*Magua and Nayonte, Amani Kites, 2012-2014*

Handmade paper kites, photo vinyl, Kanga cloth

Luciano began his work with kites in 2002 when he took Puerto Rican students from Brooklyn to Vieques, Puerto Rico, a small island used as a bombing range and site for U.S. Navy training activities. The students designed and flew kites emblazoned with their self portraits across the fences that surrounded the bombing range as a symbolic act of peaceful protest.

Swahili for “peace,” *Amani Kites* was a public art project in Nairobi, Kenya created through the smARTpower program, an initiative of the Bronx Museum of the Arts and Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs of the U.S. Department of State. For the project, Luciano worked with local artists to help participants create large-scale, handmade kites featuring life-sized portraits. As the participants flew their kites, they lifted their own portraits into the skies, forming the basis for a series of conversations about flying, freedom and identity. The project has continued to expand through the artists at Wajukuu, a community-based arts organization in Nairobi.

Hiram Maristany

*Kite Flying on Rooftop*, 1964

Silver gelatin LE/Selenium print, printed 2022

Maristany reflected, “This photograph to me is very, very important and symbolic because I’m not much older than the subject [Charlie Diaz]. I’m maybe two to three years older than he is, but what I was doing was trying to record and trying to show that we were not consumed with all of the poverty and the anger and the mistreatment, all the negative things that we had to deal with in that, but we also knew how to play. We also knew how to enjoy ourselves and how to find things that were of value to us. It’s a significant thing because, for me, it was a way of releasing a lot of the aggressive anger that many of us had. I find it very, very pleasing that this photograph has a lineage; it’s old. It still evokes a sense of joy in the wind and the movement, the moving and trying to raise the kite higher and higher into the sky...It was not just individuals, but it was communal, there were a lot of people engaged in flying kites.”

Miguel Luciano

*Amani Kites, SmARTpower project, Nairobi, Kenya, 2012*

Video, 15 min 30 sec.

Film produced and directed by RAVA Films

Commissioned by the U.S. Department of State and the Bronx Museum of Arts

Rather watch the video on your own device? Find it here:



Miguel Luciano

*Young Lord*, 2017

1969 Schwinn Fastback, restored and customized

This 1969 Schwinn Fastback (released during the same year that the Young Lords chapter was founded in New York City) is part of a series of bicycles turned sculptures that commemorate activist histories and the traditions of Puerto Rican Schwinn Clubs in NYC. Schwinn was one of the first American bicycle companies to have stores in Puerto Rico. As a result, many Puerto Rican migrants who came to New York City in the 1950s-70s remember these bikes from their childhood on the island and in the city. In the tradition of the bike clubs, Luciano remakes these vintage objects of Americana into symbols of Puerto Rican culture and pride. The bike, deceptively alluring, provides an entry point to learn about the complicated relationship between the United States and Puerto Rico, as well as the revolutionary history of the Young Lords and ongoing struggles for self-determination. Purple was the official color of the Young Lords, further referenced in the sculptures of AK-47s on a nearby wall.

Miguel Luciano

*Coquí Kiddie Ride, 2003*

Coin-operated kiddie ride with sound

This kiddie ride assumes the guise of the coquí, a small tree frog indigenous to Puerto Rico and one of the island's national symbols. When a quarter is placed into the ride, one hears recordings of coquíes singing in the rainforest. The island sounds emanating from a mechanical kiddie ride on the streets of New York are nostalgic for many, and an incongruously playful introduction to Puerto Rican culture for those who have grown up away from the island.

*Quarters are available from the gallery attendants, to listen, and the ride can be ridden by children.*

Miguel Luciano

*Health, Food, Housing, & Education, 2015*

Wood, urethane enamel, vinyl

Based on a 1971 poster by the Young Lords, these three-dimensional sculptures illustrate the Young Lords' work towards self-determination and a reclamation of the dignity of their communities through their four central tenants in support of basic human needs: health, food, housing, and education. These are written on the forestocks of the rifles, with the word "struggle" featured on each magazine as the ammunition for each cause. This work was originally created for the exhibition *¡Presente! The Young Lords in New York* at El Museo del Barrio.

Miguel Luciano

*Pimp My Piragua*, 2009

Customized tricycle-pushcart, sound, video, LEDs

Piraguas are a Puerto Rican shaved ice treat that are common on the island, as well as in locations with large Caribbean populations such as New York City. Piraguas also serve as a way for piragüeros to support themselves independently and have long been part of the informal street economy of the city. In his memoir on his time with the Young Lords, Miguel “Mickey” Meléndez reflects on the importance of the piragua within Nuyorican culture: “Those shaved-ice cones filled with Caribbean tropical syrups, not only ease the body during the hot summers, their sweet goodness reminds of us of who we are and where we come from, without words.”

A tricked-out version of humble island traditions with essential references to Nuyorican street culture, *Pimp My Piragua* features flat screen video monitors, LED lights and a high-powered sound system, while still being fully functional as a piragua cart. During a performance here in Binghamton on April 30, Luciano will take the sculpture out of the museum and activate it during the University’s Spring Fling.

Miguel Luciano

*RUN-A-BOUT*, 2017

1969 Schwinn Run-A-Bout, chrome-plated machete, flags

From a series of bicycle sculptures concerning political parties in Puerto Rico, the Run-A-Bout references Puerto Rico's pro-independence party, the Partido Independentista Puertorriqueño (PIP). It is the smallest major party on the island, yet the multiple horns allude to their ability to have a loud anti-colonial voice. The Run-A-Bout was Schwinn's first collapsible bike, thereby reinforcing ideas of freedom because one could collapse it and take it with them anywhere. Luciano is also interested in the wordplay of the bike's title: "to *run about* is to frolic or run free, but to run a 'Bout' is to be in control of a battle. It's about having control, which takes us back to the fundamental question of self-determination and independence and being in control of our own destiny."

A chrome-plated machete hanging off the back of the bike as a symbol of resistance. It refers to the sugar cane workers, some of the first workers organized by Pedro Albizu Campos, a leading figure of the Puerto Rican Nationalist party and defender of the working class, who resisted the tyranny of U.S. sugar corporations on the island. In the 1930s Albizu Campos led an island-wide agricultural strike that successfully increased wages for the workers.

In this work, the Puerto Rican flag merges with the red, black and green colors of the Pan-African flag, reimagining the island's struggle for independence within an Afro-Caribbean cultural and historical framework. The black star on the bike's seat, the Black Star of Africa, is another symbol of Pan-Africanism and anti-colonialism which puts Black and Puerto Rican liberation movements in conversation with each other.



Hiram Maristany and Miguel Luciano

*Young Lords member with Pa'lante Newspaper, 1970*

Vinyl banner from the public art project *Mapping Resistance: The Young Lords in El Barrio, 2019*

*Pa'lante* (a contraction of *para adelante*, meaning “move forward” or “onward”) was a bilingual newspaper produced by the Young Lords and inspired by *The Black Panther* newspaper of the Black Panther Party. *Pa'lante* focused on a variety of social justice issues emphasized by the Young Lords – from the Puerto Rican independence movement to issues of police brutality, environmental justice, and health and housing concerns. It confronted racism, sexism, colonialism and oppression through political education.

This banner was part of Luciano and Maristany’s 2019 public art project *Mapping Resistance: The Young Lords in El Barrio*, celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Young Lords in New York City. The project transformed ten iconic photographs from Maristany’s archive into billboard-sized images, and placed them at the same locations that the history had taken place 50 years prior. Luciano and Maristany led walking tours throughout the neighborhood, reactivating this history in the streets where it occurred at a time when widespread gentrification in East Harlem threatens to erase it.

For more information on *Mapping Resistance: The Young Lords in El Barrio* visit:



Hiram Maristany

*Young Man with Roses*, 1970

Silver gelatin LE/Selenium print, printed 2022

Maristany recalled, “My path when I started was to photograph on my block. I photographed my neighbors, I photographed my friends, I photographed people who I knew and it was almost an instant bond of trust. They knew me and I was not an outsider. These are the kinds of things that, I don’t know if easy is the best word, but allowed me to do certain things within my community through photographing. I always tried to photograph people in the most natural way, as opposed to looking for someone to pose. It was always an attempt to honor them. It was always an attempt to reflect, to show them as best I could without altering them, without changing them, without making them become something else and I tried my best to do that.”

Hiram Maristany

*Hydrant: In the Air*, 1963

Silver gelatin LE/Selenium print, printed 2022

Maristany described, “This image to me is important because it speaks to something that a lot of my generation and maybe a few generations later had in common. East Harlem was a place that, in the summer, was very, very, very hot and very, very uncomfortable and one of the things we did was to open a hydrant and spray ourselves with water, to cool ourselves down. It became something of, almost a ritual for a lot of us. It was a form of doing something that relieved us from the tremendous heat, but also was very joyful and very pleasant.”

Hiram Maristany

*Hydrant: Hand*, 1963

Silver gelatin LE/Selenium print, printed 2022

Hiram Maristany

*Children at Play*, 1965

Silver gelatin LE/Selenium print, printed 2022

Hiram Maristany

*Lechón / Roasting Pig in Alley, 1971*

Silver gelatin LE/Selenium print, printed 2022

Lechón is a whole pig, roasted slowly on a spit over charcoal, a dish for gatherings and celebrations for Puerto Rican communities on the island and in the diaspora.

Maristany explained, “[This image] speaks to the gathering of people who were going to be celebrating. It is the kind of thing that speaks to the way East Harlem used to be. It was very, very poor, but we were not defined by our poverty. In my way, I tried to respond by attempting to level the playing field, and to show the beauty in the community. East Harlem was a beautiful place because of what the people were doing in that space...My work is reflective of a love affair that I’ve had with my community.”

Hiram Maristany

*Hydrant*, ca. 1963

Digital print mounted on sintra

Hiram Maristany

*Group of Young Men on 111th Street, 1966*

Silver gelatin LE/Selenium print, printed 2022

Hiram Maristany

*The Gathering, 1964*

Silver gelatin LE/Selenium print, printed 2022

Maristany explained, “One of the things that I realized at an early age is that most of the time whenever we saw images of us, sadly, most of the time they were negative. Sadly, they were a reflection of us by someone other than us. I had a lot of resentment around that and I tried my best to present a more fair or balanced representation of us, to show our joy and to show our passion, to show who we were, to try and bring out our humanity without going to the other extreme and creating stuff that was not true. Images like this are very, very important to me because we were never given that opportunity and that’s why I’m very blessed and honored that some of these images still endure after many, many decades.”



Hiram Maristany

*Young Lords, Children marching in the funeral procession for  
Julio Roldán, 1970*

Silver gelatin LE/Selenium print, printed 2022

Julio Roldán was a Young Lords member arrested in 1970. He was jailed overnight and authorities announced the following morning that he was found hanged in his cell. In protest of his death in the custody of police, community members marched in solidarity with the Young Lords who carried Roldán's coffin from the funeral home to the Spanish Methodist Church in what became known as the second takeover of the People's Church. The Young Lords then occupied the church for weeks, offering free breakfast programs, health services, and cultural programming to the community. In addition, they successfully pressured the NYC Department of Corrections into a series of reforms including educational programs and improved health care for incarcerated people.

Hiram Maristany

*Kids on bikes, 111th Street, 1970*

Phototex

Maristany described, “This [image] is really joyful because it was a big deal for them to be photographed with their bicycles. The smallest member of this group, he’s centered in the white shirt. He was like, ‘Hold up, man, wait a minute. Wait, wait.’ He was really proud of his bike, and somehow or another, his bike was better than all the others. It’s a real pleasure to see this because it’s just joyful; [how] joyful they were with their bikes.”

Hiram Maristany

*Young Lords and community march to free the Panther 21, 1966*

Silver gelatin LE/Selenium print, printed 2022

Hiram Maristany

*The Bronx March, 1969*

Silver gelatin LE/Selenium print, printed 2022

The Panther 21 was a group of twenty-one members of the Black Panther Party who were arrested and accused of planning bombings and attacks on police stations in New York City in 1969. All twenty-one Panthers were later acquitted after revelations during the trial showed that police infiltrators had themselves played the key organizing roles in the planning. This occurred while FBI and NYPD COINTELPRO operations regularly sought to disrupt and destroy both the Black Panthers and the Young Lords organizations.

These two iconic photographs feature community members and Young Lords marching from the Bronx to East Harlem, and eventually on to Queens, marching in solidarity with the Black Panthers. They marched for the freedom of Bobby Seale, the freedom of the Panther 21, and in support of the broader liberation struggles of the Puerto Rican people on the island and in the diaspora. The woman at the center of the top photograph was not a member of the Young Lords, but instead a community member who took part in all of the marches, and an example of the strong community support the Young Lords had in El Barrio.

Hiram Maristany

*Takeover of the People's Church, 1969*

Silver gelatin LE/Selenium print, printed 2022

By October 1969, the Young Lords' free breakfast program had reached capacity, and they were looking for space to expand. They approached the reverend at the First Spanish Methodist Church, but despite having no outreach in the community he rejected the Young Lords' request. The Sunday after Christmas, the Young Lords reentered the church, chained and nailed the doors shut, and hung a sign in the second-floor window announcing that it was now "La Iglesia de la Gente" (The People's Church), with Central Committee members outside, answering reporters' questions. They held the church for eleven days before the police entered the space and arrested 105 Young Lords and their supporters, charging them all with trespassing.

Hiram Maristany

*Buttons*, 1969

Silver gelatin LE/Selenium print, printed 2022

Miguel Luciano

*Black Pyramids - Panthers and Lords (after Hiram Maristany's 'Buttons', 1969)*, 2015

Original vintage buttons from the Black Panther Party and the Young Lords Party, ca. 1969, leather, wood

*Black Pyramids* is Luciano's first work based on Maristany's photographs. It was produced as part of *Anchor*, a 2015 exhibition at the Hunter East Harlem Gallery, in which Maristany invited Luciano and five other contemporary artists to respond to work in his portfolio. Luciano chose Maristany's *Buttons*, assembling a work that echoes triangular compositions throughout the photograph, including the triangular lapels of the leather jacket. This work commemorates the historic solidarity between the Young Lords and the Black Panther Party through the inclusion of original vintage buttons that reference the march to free the Panther 21 in 1969.

Hiram Maristany

*Clothing Drive, 1971*

Silver gelatin LE/Selenium print, printed 2022

Among the many public services that the Young Lords offered to community members, from free breakfast programs for children and lead paint testing in homes, to tuberculosis and sickle-cell anemia testing, they organized several clothing drives for families in need. This photograph depicts the first clothing drive in the People's Church during the winter of 1970-71.

Artist unknown

*Young Lords Poster*, 1970

Silkscreen on paper

Collection of Miguel Luciano

Hiram Maristany

*Juan Gonzalez, Minister of Education of the Young Lords, at original storefront office headquarters, 1969*

Silver gelatin LE/Selenium print, printed 2022

Immediately following the Garbage Offensive, the Young Lords established a headquarters in El Barrio and developed an organizational structure and political platform modeled after the Black Panther Party. Building on direct conversations that had catalyzed the Garbage Offensive, the brick-and-mortar presence provided an anchor for the community, as well as a place to register local grievances and find avenues for redress. It was the Young Lords' center of gravity. From here, members engaged with neighborhood residents, planned actions, and built community.



Hiram Maristany

*Denise Oliver, Minister of Finance, at original storefront office headquarters, 1969*

Silver gelatin LE/Selenium print, printed 2022

Denise Oliver-Velez was one of the few women to gain a place in the Young Lords' governing hierarchy as a member of the Central Committee of the Young Lords, first as minister of finance and then as minister of economic development. Like many other male-dominated radical groups, the Young Lords had internalized sexism and were confronted by the women in the organization. Oliver-Velez reflected on that moment, "We developed an awareness of what Women's Liberation is all about and the role of the woman in the revolution. As we began to grow and develop politically, we started to force the brothers to deal with us within the Party. One thing we realized was that although the Thirteen Point Program said 'We want equality for women, Machismo must be revolutionary and not oppressive,' machismo was never gonna be revolutionary...And so through our political growth and development, that point in the program was changed [to] 'We want equality for women. Down with machismo and male chauvinism.'"

Hiram Maristany

*X-ray Truck*, 1970

Silver gelatin LE/Selenium print, printed 2022

Tuberculous, a serious lung disease that is both highly contagious and airborne, had long been linked with poverty and overcrowded housing. The Puerto Rican community in East Harlem had the highest tuberculosis rates in the city and yet some of the worst access to health services.

Young Lords member, Miguel “Mickey” Melendez, described the action: “The news reached El Barrio at lightning speed: we were facing a tuberculosis outbreak...Hundreds of people were being treated for the deadly disease...In order to curb the outbreak we had to test everyone at risk. When NYC health officials dismissed our request to give advance notice of the mobile X-ray truck location...we were in shock!...[we] decided it was time to take things into our own hands. This time, Juan Gonzalez would take the lead: ‘Appropriate the truck,’ he said.

The plan was to conduct a swift but smooth takeover of the mobile facility in broad daylight on a busy street and bring it to a preselected location. It was a daring plan and, because it was so bold and audacious, would serve as another media event and urban legend that would eventually paint El Barrio as the Sherwood Forest for oppressed Puerto Ricans in the United States.

Clad in lab coats and looking like medical professionals, we walked toward the truck. Pi and Huey rushed inside, while I waited outside trying to look nonchalant...A few minutes later Pi opened the side door enough to throw the keys to me...I was supposed to drive. There was no time for private fears...under my unskilled command, the machine moved onto Lexington...Looking into the side mirrors as much as possible to make sure the police were not chasing us, I drove very slowly...As I set the brake and jumped out, Pi and Huey opened the side door and unfolded the stairway. Immediately the people lined up for the tests, and many Young Lords in berets surrounded the truck and proceeded to tape placards up all over it, proclaiming ‘HEALTH CARE IS A RIGHT, NOT A PRIVILEGE.’ Puerto Rican flags were the final touch.”

The Young Lords convinced the medical technicians to travel with them in this action. In the three days that the X-ray truck was parked across the street from the Young Lords headquarters, it tested 770 people, more than twice the number of people normally serviced in that amount of time. Soon thereafter, the Young Lords were able to negotiate with the city a more stable schedule, operating 7 days a week, 12 hours a day.

Hiram Maristany

*The Garbage Offensive*, 1969

Silver gelatin LE/Selenium print, printed 2022

The Garbage Offensive of 1969 was the first public action of The Young Lords and modeled an approach to local organizing on behalf of the community that relied on active listening to help it craft frameworks of agency and self-determination.

Young Lords member, Miguel “Mickey” Melendez described the process: “The people of El Barrio taught us to open our eyes to the experience of the people. After the shocking fact-finding mission around the streets of El Barrio, it became clear why garbage was such an important issue. As a community we were denied the resources of the municipal government. Sanitation trucks drove through our community to get to the more ‘affluent’ pockets of the city. In the middle- and upper-class white neighborhoods of the Bronx, Queens, and Brooklyn, away from this Latino community, garbage was not spread in the streets and on the sidewalks. The people in those neighborhoods did not have to spend their mornings or evenings cleaning their sidewalks. The New York City Department of Sanitation did it for them. The smell of rotten food and the stockpiles of garbage were left untouched in El Barrio for long days, right in front of building entrances, playgrounds and schools.”

Rather than simply petition the city for better service, The Young Lords confronted the local Sanitation depot, demanding brooms to clean the streets. They took the brooms to 111th Street and 3rd Avenue, and together with community members, they swept the garbage into the middle of the street, forming barricades that halted traffic. To prevent motorists from removing the garbage cans, they set the barricades on fire, forcing the police and fire department to intervene. They mobilized the press to document the offensive and effectively shamed the city into providing better sanitation services.

Photography encouraged!



#JoyPlayResistance #MiguelLuciano #HiramMaristany  
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