

The exhibition *DRAFTING DISSENT: Drawings from Cuba's Recent Activist Scene* evaluates the cultural and political discourse of a new generation of Cuban artists. Over the last six years, a wave of activists residing in Cuba and abroad, have used a range of artistic techniques to raise attention to Cuba's internal political conflict. Drawings have been essential to punctuate specific events, reflect on traditional icons of nationhood, and socialize an alternative understanding of Cuban culture.

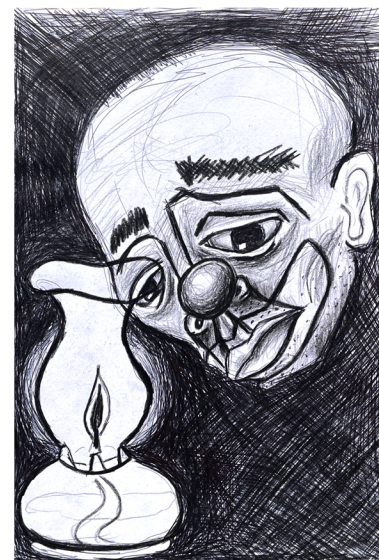
The combination of politics and art that is called activism has not been common in Cuba since the 1980s. This was the time when a fresh intellectual and artistic generation profoundly transformed the limits of artistic permissibility in the country. This artistic Avant-Garde of the eighties in Cuba put in motion the development of an alternative culture that became less engaged with the nationalist ("revolutionary") narrative that had characterized the country since 1959.

During the twenty-first century, the reach of this alternative art scene extended well beyond the controls exerted by state institutions. 2018 marks a crucial turning point when new leadership in the country was vowing to implement Decree 349. This decree hoped to control and ultimately crush Havana's cultural underground networks. It did not go well. Many artists, musicians, writers, and intellectuals who never thought of themselves as part of a political movement, less to say activists, engaged in an organized rebuke of this legislation. As a result, Decree 349 was never fully implemented, even though many activists were forced into exile, and political persecution has increased considerably on the island.

The three artists introduced in this exhibition, Camila R. Lobón, Raychel Carrión, and Luis Manuel Otero Alcántara, have been, to different degrees, at the center of this movement. The drawings in this exhibition follow their journey as artists/activists. Lobón plays and subverts political icons, Carrión's gore explores intergenerational trauma, and Alcántara reflects on his experience of confinement in a maximum-security prison in Cuba. These drawings represent the practice of conceptual meditation on the reality of political persecution, isolation, and widespread despair on the island as drafted by these young artists. As Carrión reminds us: Drawing is first-hand thought. To think is to think of ourselves and to say is to say in otherness.



**Raychel Carrión** is a visual artist born in Havana, Cuba in 1978. Carrión graduated in 2011 from the Institute of Superior Arts (ISA) in Havana, Cuba (ISA). He also studied at Catedra Arte de Conducta from 2006-2008, Tania Bruguera's workshop on behavioral and political art. Carrión's work deconstructs cultural perceptions based on stereotyped ideologies. His work questions the normalization of manipulated historiography and the role played by the cult to a leader. The approach focuses on the "politicization of the affective" as a generator of ideological unity. As a result of it, Carrión explores the detriment of personal singularity and the repression of individual freedoms. Raychel Carrión's drawings have been exhibited in Germany, Spain, France, Austria, and the USA.



**Luis Manuel Otero Alcántara** is a Cuban artist and human rights defender whose performances are critical of the conditions many Cubans face. Alcántara leads the San Isidro Movement - an artists' collective that promotes freedom of expression and cultural rights. He is a co-founder of the Museum of Dissidence, a website and public art project reclaiming and celebrating dissent. Alcántara uses art and culture to contest the ongoing violations of freedom of expression by the Cuban government. In his early work, he created sculptures of human forms, animals, and characters from comic books using salvaged materials. He has had his work confiscated and has been forcibly detained multiple times. His ongoing detention has drawn protests and statements of solidarity from international artists who support his unwavering fight for the freedom of cultural expression in Cuba. The drawings presented in this exhibition were created during his current imprisonment.



**Camila Ramírez Lobón** was born in Camagüey, Cuba in 1995. Her practice focuses on the narration and illustration of a social and political imaginary that subverts the Cuban totalitarian narrative through individual memory. Graduated from the Instituto Superior de Arte, La Habana in 2019, she worked as coordinator of the Hannah Arendt Activism Institute (INSTAR), founded by artist Tania Bruguera in 2015. Lobón is a columnist for the independent Cuban magazine Hypermedia where her drawings are regularly published. Her work has been exhibited in Havana, Montreal, Buenos Aires, Berlin and Prague. Lobón has been an active member of many of the initiatives that have starred in recent years in the claim for freedom of expression and civic and political rights in Cuba, such as the 27N group and the San Isidro Movement.