

# Evidence of Things Unseen: Pepón Osorio's Embelequero Aesthetic in the *Scene of the Crime*<sup>1</sup>

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“Osorio treats the image as an object and the object as an image, in order to animate the history of otherwise absent figures. The effect is a dreamlike displacement or condensation of people and things.”<sup>2</sup>

On February 26th, 1993 detectives entered the Whitney Museum of American Art on Manhattan's Upper East Side to investigate the scene of a violent homicide. In what appeared to be a small apartment and amidst a chaotic backdrop of downturned furniture, broken glass, and heaps of scattered décor, detectives encountered a shrouded female body face down in the center of the home. Although the space and the many personal belongings give potential insight into the identity of the female, she remained unknown with her face obscured from full view. While actual detectives used yellow caution tape to cordon off the *Scene*, this horrific mise-en-scène was no ordinary crime. Instead, the unsettling site was a large installation work called the *Scene of the Crime (Whose Crime?)* (1993) by Puerto Rican-born installation artist Pepón Osorio. (Figure 1)



Figure 1. Pepón Osorio, *Scene of the Crime (Whose Crime?)*, 1993, mixed-media and video installation (as shown at the 1993 Biennial Exhibition, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York), Collection of the Bronx Museum of Arts, New York. Image credit: Frank Gimpaya (Source: J.A. González, *Pepón Osorio*, xvi.)

The work debuted at the controversial 1993 Biennial of the Whitney Museum of American Art. Divided public reception was captured in the pages of *The New York Times*: on the one hand, condemning the Biennial for abandoning traditional aesthetic values and, on the other, praising the show for its visionary inclusivity of underrepresented artists and new media.<sup>3</sup> A number of critics from the *National Review* to the *Third Text*, however, decried the show's "political correctness" in telling phrases that described the "artist as victim's representative," displaying "ethnic narcissism," and "excess" linked to "cultural torpor."<sup>4</sup> Some reviewers even featured imagery ("battered women" or "wounded bodies") and photography of the *Scene of the Crime* to visually represent their argument of the show's literal and detestable nature.<sup>5</sup> These particular attacks and visual cues make plain the large impact that Osorio's work had on critics. Between loathsome dismissals of show's PC agenda and praise for its critical foresight, reviewers of the time failed to closely analyze Osorio's aesthetic interventions with the figure, vernacular form, and medium.

My analysis of the *Scene* examines these understudied symbolic and material qualities through the lens of Osorio's *embelequero* (embellishment/er) aesthetic. As a critical practice, this aesthetic embellishes everyday objects and sites with consumer goods as a critique of consumer culture. The arresting scene of the *shrouded* figure overwhelmed by material possessions in her working-class apartment, reveals how the *embelequero* aesthetic works in the tensions, or liminal spaces, between what is seen and unseen, or in/visible.<sup>6</sup> In other words, the contingencies of the in/visible unfold within a proliferation of objects and images—a kind of hyper-visibility within which the invisible takes place. Caught between fantasy and reality, this *embelequero* drama elicits an emotional response and shift in perception for the viewer. Art history and visual culture scholar Jennifer A. González describes the ways that this *embelequero* aesthetic creates its visual idiom by appropriating "signs already circulating in mass culture" to critique cultural commodification and highlight the constitutive power of consumption on "subject formation and class disparity."<sup>7</sup> *Embelequero's* engagement with the politics of visibility, meaning, and representation provides new insight into the role of the central figure as an orienting subject in an embellished world of consumer critique.<sup>8</sup> Before exploring the symbolic figure at the center of the *Scene*, I first expound on biographical, sociohistorical, and contemporary connections to Osorio's *embelequero* aesthetic as a primer for understanding its material complexity in the *Scene of the Crime*.

Benjamin "Pepón" Osorio Encarnación was born in 1955 in Santurce, Puerto Rico, a cultural hub in the island's capital, San Juan. As a teenager, he had a formative encounter with Francisco Oller's (1833–1917) famous allegorical painting *El Velorio* (*The Wake*, 1893).<sup>9</sup> (Figure 5) Standing at a massive 96 x 156.5 inches, the iconic painting is a model of Oller's unique fusion of realism and impressionism, and depicts a rural Puerto Rican ritual feast called the *baquiné* (a child's wake).<sup>10</sup> Twenty-four individuals of all skin tones including barefoot *jibaros* (peasants or mountain folk)

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and Catholic clergymen occupy a traditional native *bohío* (a wood home with thatch roof). The figures stand in various poses and states of anticipation awaiting the roast pork feast, all except for an older dark-skinned man who gazes upon the child at the center of the painting. The *jibaro's* headscarf and earring provide a visual cue that he was formerly enslaved, alluding not only to his social standing within the painting but to the intersection of race, class, and nationality during late nineteenth-century Puerto Rico.<sup>11</sup> Adeptly critiquing the cultural hegemony of Spanish colonial rule, the work is a provocative post-abolition indictment of the continuing racial oppression in Puerto Rico twenty years after the emancipation of 1873. As one of the earliest Spanish settlements to enslave native Caribbeans and Africans and as a U.S. territory since 1898, Puerto Rico shares in the long history (of the Atlantic slave trade) of racially instituted slavery, including the legacy of racism and colorism that persisted on the island and in the Jim Crow South. This complexity is symbolized visually by the Afro-Puerto Ricans who occupy the dark spaces of the composition or who are otherwise obscured from full view. In a 2004 interview, the artist recalled his connection to the conscientious *jibaro* saying, "I just stood there and became that man..."<sup>12</sup> Osorio's early exposure to Oller's famous work had a lasting impact on Osorio's visual idiom, including the use of narrative, symbolism, dialectic tension, and archetypal representation within a tableau-like composition meant to convey a larger message through a local scene.

Leaving behind the longstanding graphic arts tradition of socially engaged art and the burgeoning avant-garde scene of San Juan, Osorio arrived in New York City in 1975. His arrival coincided with art movements like Minimalism, Conceptualism, Pop, Neo-expressionism, and social practice art. There he completed a Bachelor's in Sociology at Lehman College and worked for the city as a social worker while being involved with social organizations like the United Bronx Parents (UBP).<sup>13</sup> At one political action with UBP, Osorio protested the racist representations of Puerto Ricans and Blacks in the Western-inspired police crime film, *Fort Apache, the Bronx* (1981). This event no doubt informed his ongoing interests in what cultural studies scholars like Stuart Hall have described as the "politics of representation."<sup>14</sup> In the mid-eighties, Osorio began work in stage design, performance, and sculpture in Puerto Rico and New York, a connection visible in the dramatic narrative form of his later installation work, including the *Scene of the Crime*. Performances, such as, *Escalio (Tillable Land)*, 1983 and *Cocinando (Cooking)*, 1985 explored land rights and identity in Puerto Rico. Artistic concerns such as vernacular culture, urban spatial politics, displacement, site-specificity, and representation characterize the social practice at the heart of Osorio's emerging *embelequero* aesthetic. Osorio's mid-seventies migration to the United States, early engagements with social activism, social work, and socially minded performances laid the groundwork for his critical praxis.<sup>15</sup>

In Osorio's words, an *embelequero* is "someone who is capable of making a temple out of nothing."<sup>16</sup> The term is adapted from the mid-century vernacular practices of Puerto Rican *embelequeros* (embellishers) and *rescatadores* (rescuers) who constructed and embellished makeshift *casitas* (small houses) from disused objects and sites in a process of land reclamation.<sup>17</sup> The *casitas* of the 1970s South Bronx are a model of this practice and a good example of Puerto Rican adaptation to significant urban disinvestment through neighborhood improvement and cultural place-making. Building on these vernacular traditions, Osorio's *embelequero* aesthetic of "more is better" focuses on six overlapping artistic concerns: 1) the appropriation of consumer goods and objects of popular culture aesthetically rendered as a dramatic concentration of forms; 2) site and cultural specificity in tandem with community collaboration; 3) unsettling displacement rooted in urban spatial politics, which shifts peoples, places, and signs as a way to move between familiar and unfamiliar spaces; 4) the play of image and object, or the simulacrum and the real; 5) a class-based critique of identity markers such as nationality, race, and gender; and, finally 6) the "politics of display," which is related to the politics of representation and politics of visibility.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, it is evident that Osorio's critical *embelequero* aesthetic is often conveyed through the tension of in/visibility, re-purposing, re-locating, and re-signifying to highlight and critique the matrix of social associations undergirding our understanding of representation and meaning.

Early mixed media works like *La Bicicleta* (*The Bike*, 1985), *La Cama* (*The Bed*, 1987), and *El Chandelier* (1988) forecast the *Scene's embelequero* tendencies and play with in/visibility. For example, the cruiser, four-poster bed, and crystal chandelier, everyday objects embellished with photos, multi-racial dolls, figurines, plastic fauna and floral decorations, delicate fabrics, and frills, represent working-class aspirations of upward mobility. They are not only embellished consumer symbols, they are oddly out of place within a museum setting, their drama and careful detail highlight the complex nexus of identity-formation through the signs of nationality, race, gender, and class. In doing so, the works raise many questions about the politics of visibility, about who and what is seen and not seen. In other words, the undisclosed owner of the bike, bed, and chandelier is made visible, or given meaning, through their objects of conspicuous consumption as well as the highlighted and hidden symbolic meanings in the images and objects. This matrix of in/visible associations "give shape to a given set of social relations and communities," such as the physical location and building of cultural institutions and the ideologies and norms that encode them. Osorio calls this concept of in/visible societal associations "social architecture" and describes it as the "intersections between individuals, communities, and the built (or rebuilt) environment."<sup>19</sup> Working with the dramatic tension of in/visibility, the *embelequero* aesthetic calls attention to the substructure, superstructure, and façade of cultural representation and attempts to shift our assumptions about the social and visual worlds we create.

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Osorio's predilection for vernacular ornamentation and drama has led some critics to dub his style "Baroque," "Nuyorican Baroque," and even kitsch. However, this tendency to quickly label can overlook important precedents while limiting this work to a form of derivative art.<sup>20</sup> Despite modern Euro-American conceptions of kitsch as a more contemporary manifestation of popular material culture, Osorio's *embelequero* aesthetic of everyday objects and *chucherías* (knickknacks) has notable precedents in indigenous Caribbean traditions. Anna Indych, a scholar of contemporary Latin American art, points out that far from Greenberg's fixed conception of mass culture invading high art, kitsch is, in fact, mutable and subject to changes in context, history, and culture. Indych reminds us that even long entrenched concepts like kitsch are not fixed in stone and, if freed from its historical constraints, can shift our understanding of art's material and cultural origins and its contemporary valuation. Moreover, attempts to locate *embelequero* within a stylistic grouping must consider whether interpretive designations like kitsch are capable of capturing a culturally specific critical practice while exploring the longer history of embellished forms in the Americas.

A cross-cultural system of art made from traded goods existed well before Spanish colonization.<sup>21</sup> This early Caribbean form of embellished mixed-media is exemplified in the highly decorated sacred objects created by the Arawak-Taíno nation of the central Caribbean. A *Colonial Bible Lectern*, today housed at the Vatican's Missionary Ethnological Museum, testifies to the mastery of Taíno artists who used exchange objects, culturally-specific ways of making, and local forms of knowledge to create a lectern of fishbone and tortoiseshell shaped in the stylized form of a conch shell. This sanctified dais made of local and traded goods served as the foundation, the material support structure, for the Christian holy book. The lavishly appointed *Beaded Cemi* (ancestral effigy) at the Luigi Pigorini National Museum of Prehistory and Ethnography is another construction of mixed trade goods.<sup>22</sup> Taíno artists used high-status European objects alongside local and imported goods to create the double-sided, Janus figure made of precious and everyday materials: such as rhinoceros horn, cotton, shell, glass beads, and mirror shards. In doing so, they transformed the cultural and social significance of glass and mirrors and extended the aesthetic expression of their local materials. Though there is limited space in this paper to explore the *longue durée* of this particular Caribbean tradition, it is important to cite the early Caribbean as a crucial site and source for an appropriative and embellished aesthetic in the Americas. The impact of this aesthetic is visible today in Latin American and Latino/a art practices, such as in Osorio's *embelequero*, *rasquachismo*, and strands of Ultrabaroque.

Though the *détournement* of French Marxist theorist Guy Debord continues to inform subversive critiques of Capitalist consumer culture, notably in the culture jamming of the 1980s, the Latin American and Latino/a counterpart is keenly attuned to the culturally convergent spaces of subject formation.<sup>23</sup> In the southwestern U.S.,

the exhibition *Chicano Aesthetics: Rasquachismo* (Phoenix, 1989), featured artists like Luis Jimenez and Gilbert “Magu” Luján who celebrated their working-class and bilingual culture by recreating everyday objects and popular images from the “*rasquache*” perspective of “los de abajo.”<sup>24</sup> Just over a decade later in the western U.S., the exhibition *Ultrabaroque: Aspects of Post Latin American Art* (San Diego, 2000) showcased works by *Tejano* Franco Mondini-Ruiz (*High Yellow*, 1999; *Mexique*, 2000; and *Infinito Botánico*, 2000) who played within the “excess of [consumer] signs” to critique cultural identity while troubling essentialized notions of *Tejano* or Mexican American art.<sup>25</sup> Other examples of this critical *embelequero* flair can be found throughout the Americas: Tirzo Martha’s installation *Spirit of the Caribbean*, 2005; Dimitri Obergfell’s installation *Federal Fashion Market*, 2017; Jose Castellón’s print series *Priti Biks* (2010); and in Miguel Luciano’s Pop inflected multimedia series *Pure Plantanium* (2006).<sup>26</sup> While there is much to be said about the differences and similarities across these aesthetic practices, the few examples above capture four decades of work engaged at the confluence of regional, national, and consumer interpellation, more recently pushing the discourse beyond fixed artistic styles and labels like Latino Art. Similar to Osorio’s *embelequero*, these aesthetics embellish to create an ongoing dialogue about the in/visible power dynamics of representation, identity, and consumer culture often via the cultural intersections of nationality, gender, race, and class.

The Whitney entered the critical discourse of art and identity momentarily with its 1993 Biennial. Specifically, the Biennial followed a critical exhibition tradition that was pushing back against centuries of western, white, male dominance in the art world with shows like the *Great American Lesbian Art Show* (1980), *Magiciens de la terre* (*Magicians of the World*, 1989), *The Decades Show: Frameworks of Identity in the 1980s* (1990), *Chicano Art: Resistance and Affirmation* (Los Angeles, 1990-93), and *Mining the Museum* (1992-1993). However, the Whitney’s track record for centering underrepresented art and artists is limited. In 1968 and 1971 the Black Emergency Cultural Coalition (BECC) protested the museum demanding not only the inclusion of black artists but also the inclusion of black voices in authoritative roles. Though the 1993 Biennial was the first show in which white men represented the minority, the 1995 show that followed returned to a white male majority and the broad curatorial theme of “metaphor.” The artist-activists Guerilla Girls noted this return to exclusivity in their aptly titled public service message, “Traditional Values and Quality Return to the Whitney Museum, 1995.”<sup>27</sup>

Leading the charge in this atypical 1993 show was head curator, Elizabeth Sussman, who selected 150 works by 82 artists covering pressing social themes from imperialism and poverty to identity politics and the AIDS crisis. Artists in the Biennial included, now well-known, figures, such as, Cindy Sherman, Lorna Simpson, Glenn Ligon, Renee Green, and Gary Simmons, to name a few. Dubbed the “identity” Biennial for what critics thought was the show’s literal protest of inequality along identity

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lines, the exhibition was both commended and denounced for its attempts at political correctness.<sup>28</sup> *Times* writer, Robert Hughes sets the tone for conservative criticism in his article, “A Fiesta of Whining,” and more explicitly in his byline, “Preachy and political, the Whitney Biennial celebrates sodden and cant cliché.”<sup>29</sup> Echoing this sentiment, Michael Kimmelman of the *New York Times* describes the show’s moralizing condescension, literalness, and lack of visual pleasure, which he deemed puritanical leftism.<sup>30</sup> Kimmelman’s review included an image of the *Scene of the Crime* with a quote in the caption that reflects this insistence on a literal meaning: “It is as if the people who go to the Whitney are so witless and backward that they need to be told that sexual abuse and racism and violence are bad.”<sup>31</sup> A more favorable review in the *New York Times* titled “At The Whitney, A Biennial With A Social Conscience,” by female reviewer Roberta Smith, insisted that the “provocative and informative” show made its mark by taking a risk rather than passively following the trends of the art market.<sup>32</sup> These reviews reflect the contentious social and political climate of the time, but more importantly, they show how critics were remiss to move beyond a mere surface glance while missing “the cultural specificity and irony” conveyed in Osorio’s *Scene* and throughout the show.<sup>33</sup>

In fact, the irony evident throughout the show demonstrated the aesthetic and social urgency of many of the works featured in the 1993 show. The cosmic irony of the 1991 Rodney King footage by the “amateur” artist George Holliday is a case in point. John G. Hanhardt, the curator of film and video responsible for selecting both Holliday and Osorio’s work, maintained that the full King footage was in fact artistically rendered while bearing witness to the spectacle-fueled gaze of the late nineteenth century, therefore, producing “a new way of seeing what is around us.”<sup>34</sup> The well-known performance and multimedia installation, *Two Undiscovered Amerindians Visit the West*, by Coco Fusco and Guillermo Gómez-Peña plays with irony by mocking the notion of “discovery” in farcical costumes and props while also referencing the barbaric World’s Fair history of exhibiting indigenous and African peoples. Hanhardt’s effort to extend the disciplinary boundaries of film and new media are deeply embedded in the long shadow of the “modern versus popular art” framework famously canonized in Greenberg’s 1939 essay, *Avant-Garde and Kitsch*. The show’s critical response should be seen as resistance against the academic “cultural turn” of the eighties and nineties when Greenbergian modes of valuation were being challenged by the deconstructionism of postmodern theory.

The 1993 show must also be situated socio-historically, considering the political agendas and market forces that characterized the multiculturalism of the eighties. As Art historian, Shifra M. Goldman explains, the Latin American and Latino/a “boom” of the time was directly related to federal appointments, distinctions, and monetary awards for Latinos/as used to leverage support for Reagan’s unpopular Iran-Contra Affair. These “goodwill” campaigns supported many of the essentializing survey shows, including *Images of Mexico* (Dallas, 1988) and *Art of the Fantastic* (Indianapolis,

1987). Meanwhile, popular articles like “Hispanic Culture Breaks Out of the Barrio: A Latin Wave Hits the Mainstream” (1988) from *Time* magazine, exemplify the economic revival of Latin American and Latino/a cultural goods and the \$134 billion market that a decade of immigration produced.<sup>35</sup> Indeed, the economic and political landscape of nineteen-eighties reflected competing desires to represent the emerging “Hispanic” market as cultural product and constituent base. Like Osorio, artists in the 1993 Biennial pushed back against this heavily politicized and corporatized multiculturalism, by (standing on the shoulders of the representational authority won by) continuing the legacy of the artist-activists of the sixties and seventies and earlier Civil Rights and liberation movements.<sup>36</sup> By engaging directly with the impact of corporate cultural appropriation, Osorio and his peers exposed the invisible forces shaping representation and identity.



Figure 2. *Pepón Osorio, Scene of the Crime (Whose Crime?)*, bar and metal screen partition detail, 1993, mixed-media and video installation (as shown at the 1993 Biennial Exhibition, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York), Collection of the Bronx Museum of Arts, New York. Image credit: Frank Gimpaya (Source: J.A. González, *Pepón Osorio*, 33.)

In many ways, the works of the 1993 Biennial, like the *Scene of the Crime*, served as an invitation to the viewer to step into the liminal spaces between fiction and reality, to adjust their way of seeing and conceptualizing the world around them. The *embelequero* aesthetic facilitates this shift in its striking command of the beholder. Upon viewing the *Scene*, a sense of *horror vacui* (a fear of empty space) permeates every inch of the domestic space filled with signs of consumer, family, personal, and religious life. The large fictionalized apartment is partitioned by a bar and wrought iron screen that separate a living and dining room (Fig. 2). A red linoleum floor stretches beyond the installation into the viewing space, which is also closed-off by



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yellow caution tape. The dominant color scheme is consistent with the colors of the Puerto Rican and U.S. flags and also with the rich hues of Santería symbolism. The white and red of Chango, the god of thunder, and the blue of Yemaya, the god of the sea and the Atlantic Ocean, are evocative of the wrath of the cosmos and transnational displacement. Around the shrouded body, dark and light skinned Yoruban gods and hybrid Christian saints stand not only as reference to the Afro-Latino/a presence in the Caribbean but as witnesses of the *Scene*.<sup>37</sup> Among them stand the hybrid Oshun/Virgen de Caridad; marked by her gold regalia, she is the goddess of the waters and giver of life. Nearby, the syncretic Babalú-Ayé/San Lázaro, the god of healing, seems to awaken from his own death only to witness his devotee's destruction. Dramatically rendered, the relations between space, color, and iconography establish the larger composition within which the central figure and beholder are situated.

Above the body and arrangement of deities, a video of a vessel filling with blood and then shattering is projected onto a large framed mirror—a symbol of the construction and destruction, or more specifically, the geographic and ideological making and re-making of the hyphenated (colonized) Puerto Rican-American body. The moving image also conveys symbolic associations with ritual sacrifice in Santería Orisha devotion and the transubstantiation of the Christian Eucharist. The body represented by the vessel and its lifeblood attests to the religious practices that shape and constitute the figure. However, mirrored video not only alludes to the deceased women and diaspora subject but to the viewers who stand to watch the clip only to catch a glimpse of themselves in the mirror's reflection. Here, as in the extension of the red linoleum flooring that reaches beyond the yellow tape to unite the viewer with the space, Osorio's figure is positioning the viewer as active participants/witnesses in the process of construction and destruction while pointing to the constructed representation, or myth, of the *Scene* before them. Significantly, the video performs the play of in/visibility that the installation conveys as a whole by serving as both an invisible sign of corporeal remaking and a visible reflection of the situated beholder, hinting at the way the viewer is to see and how they are addressed by the work of art.

Another important aspect of Osorio's *embelequero* aesthetic is the play of images and objects, which works to convey the visible and invisible aspects of identity-formation. Framed photographs collected from Osorio's Bronx community and the archives of the Center of Puerto Rican Studies (Hunter, City University of New York) are placed among found or purchased objects from the Bronx, filling the tops of tables, ledges, and shelves. National and popular icons such as flags, decorative maps, and prints vie for prominent locations on furniture and walls. Cameras and lighting equipment, consistent with crime scene investigations and movie sets, shine a spotlight on the shrouded female. Osorio is not only framing the shrouded women through the camera light and lens but also highlighting the congruent forms of interpellation over time and space from archival photo to national icons. By creating tension between images of Puerto Ricans and their objects of national pride, Osorio plays up archival

and popular modes of representation that together produce and regulate personal and group identity.<sup>38</sup>



Figure 3. Pepón Osorio, *Scene of the Crime (Whose Crime?)*, Dining Room Detail, 1993. Mixed media and video installation, as shown at the 1993 Biennial Exhibition, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, Collection of the Bronx Museum of Arts, New York. Photograph by Frank Gimpaya. Source: J.A. González, *Pepón Osorio*, 35.

At the dining table, there is another in/visible tension at work between the happy smiling family pictured on the backs of chairs and the domestic violence represented by a newspaper on the table with a fragmented headline that reads “...Beat My Wife” (Fig. 3). The newspaper is located nearest to the chair-back photo of a young smiling woman in three-quarters pose holding a flower opposite a close-lipped man in frontal position. Their respective locations offer suggestions about who the undisclosed women in the other room might be, as well as the suspected abusive husband of the newspaper report. Along the width of the table, two other people appear: a young boy pictured left across from a more mature woman in an up-do. Though the dining room hints at the absent figures seated around the table, the black and white photos, hairstyles, and period dress hint that they are from another time, perhaps a nod to the mid-century Great Puerto Rican Migration, which is contrasted by the crumpled foil of a recently consumed takeout dinner on the table. Moreover, the display evokes the conflicting positionalities of the gendered domestic sphere in both the younger woman at the head of the table, the mature woman seated to her right, and the shrouded figure in the living room. Long, red zipper strips and frilly lace embellish the edges of the dining room chairs and a white table cloth trimmed

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in lace and covered in plastic offer a gendered and class-based frame for reading these historic images and table setting. The scene at the dining room table signifies the home as an apparatus of gendered control as well as a means of matriarchal agency and a space of working-class conspicuous consumption marked by devotion to cultural preservation. The *embelequero* sensibility of “more is better” is rich with iconography from the newspaper, the photographs, the disused items, and the delicate fabrics and finishes. These symbols stand-in for the unseen figures though their objects of historical, contemporary, and consumer representations. The dining room arrangement assortment of images and objects allude to habit of consumption: how we consume to self-fashion and how we are consumed by the readership of news media. Within the compositional structure and materials of Osorio’s installation, the *embelequero* aesthetic conveys a significant critique of the foundations and distribution of stereotypes and identity categories inside and outside of the home.

The mystery becomes more complicated when one encounters an important historical figure from the early twentieth-century depicted on a dining room chair: she is the visionary storyteller and educator Pura Belpré (1899–1982). As the first Puerto Rican librarian in New York City, her bilingual outreach programs brought the library to the homes of Latino/a children and Latino/a folk tales to the broader public. In fact, by contributing to the shelves of international literatures during a time heightened post-World War I nationalism, fables like Belpré’s *Perez and Martina* (1932) bucked dominant trends in U.S. children’s literature and education. Beyond subverting convention, Belpré was invested in the generative capacity of storytelling. Of her craft she once said, “storytelling is a living art, and each teller embellishes, polishes and recreates as she goes along without losing the thematic value.”<sup>39</sup> Belpré conveys not only the multi-authored nature of storytelling but some of its key principles; namely, that storytelling should be supported by strong central themes and that embellishment, refinement, and improvisation are related and informed by the live context of the storyteller and audience. Osorio references this tradition of “living art” while gesturing towards Belpré’s vision of storytelling as a portal to other worlds and worldviews and as a model for a multi-authored community building. Though much more could be said about Osorio’s citation of Belpré and her legacy for Puerto Rican representation in U.S. libraries, it is important to point out that like Belpré, Osorio works in and with the community to tell a fantastical story through the many objects and voices displayed in the installation, declaring an “enunciatory present” in which “objectified others may be turned into subjects of their history and experience.”<sup>40</sup> In so doing, Osorio subverts the univocal narrative and legacy of U.S. imperialism and its continued impact on working-class Puerto Ricans. By the same token, the *Scene* aspires to a community-authored cautionary tale about the consumers, producers, and regulators of cultural representation.

Having scoured the *Scene* for what the in/visible contingencies reveal, I focus again on the orienting figure at the center of the *Scene* for more clues about her story and

fate. As is apparent from the photographic evidence of the 1993 installation, the figure is continuously obscured—she is present but eerily absent within the proliferation demanded of the “*embelequero* aesthetic.”<sup>41</sup> Professor of visual culture, Liliana Ramos Collado states that the shrouded woman represents the Puerto Rican female who has been the ongoing victim of the colonial legacy. She adds, “[t]he habitat itself is a sort of prosthesis of the victim: this dead body is the emblem of Puerto Rican culture as a whole. Don’t be mistaken, this is the ancestral victim, the perpetual victim: the Other.” Cultural historian, Celeste Olalquiaga adds to this translation, saying that the coloniality and hybridity characteristic of many Latin American histories and cultures, means the “Third World” was in some ways postmodern before the “First World.”<sup>42</sup> If this shrouded body represents proto-postmodernity, then does the *Scene of the Crime* represent the ravages of the consumer era? While this interpretation offers an apt translation of the figure’s allegorized significance, I return again for more clues about the ways her absence is mediated by presence, or given form, and the ways it structures meaning and relates to the viewer in this troubling dream-like installation.

The parameters set by the installation medium provide a clue about the relationship between the figure and the viewer and how they are positioned in space and time. For example, the extension of the red linoleum floor designed to include the spectator who is nevertheless restricted by the yellow caution tape means that the figure can only be accessed through the objects and images that signify the presence of a “real” body. The viewer at the *Scene* engages but always in a historically and physically posterior position; they must piece together the victim’s identity with the bits of evidence left behind in the aftermath.<sup>43</sup> Again, the woman orients the beholder, her loss and absence drive the narrative of this dream world, fueling the spectacle within the immersive installation experience. Photos of community members and ancestors, furniture, and personal tchotchkes serve as proxy for the unseen woman, her social and class ambitions, her spiritual devotion, and her role and station in the home. These positionalities are played out in a series of tensions between image and object, the simulacrum and the real, the visual and the sensate. Osorio’s spatial composition and aesthetic of abundance convey the shrouded body as a contentious site of representation.

Charges against the installation’s presumed hyper-reality soon evaporate upon discovery of the adjacent installation space within which another relation appears between gender, race, and nationality. (Figure 4) Though there has been little mention of this part of the installation in the reviews of the time, it offers another potential answer to the titular prompt and parenthetical (*Whose Crime?*). The viewer is presented with another collection of objects and images, organized rows of shelved VHS tapes with films depicting stereotypes of Latino men, a counterpoint to the shrouded female body on the other side of the wall. Accompanying each tape are labels written by Puerto Rican-American men in Osorio’s Bronx community, who described



Figure 4. Pepón Osorio, *Scene of the Crime (Whose Crime?)*, adjacent video room detail, 1993, mixed-media and video installation (as shown at the 1993 Biennial Exhibition, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York), Collection of the Bronx Museum of Arts, New York. Image credit: Frank Gimpaya (Source: J.A. González, *Pepón Osorio*, 34.)

their essentialized representations in popular culture as violent, hypersexual, and poor—stereotypes that equally refer to Puerto Rican women and stem from a long colonial legacy. Among statements reflecting a sense of internalized racism, one participant commented “[y]ou see the negative stereotypes portrayed in the movies so many times that at some point you start believing them yourself.”<sup>44</sup> Like Osorio’s moment of becoming that observant *jibaro* at the center of *El Velorio*, the statement by the Puerto Rican participant bears witness to the power of the visual and its ability to foster critical ways of seeing and understanding. As evidence of widely distributed stereotypes, the VHS tapes and dining room newspaper render visible the fantasy of Other played out on either side of the shrouded figure. If the criminal activity is initiated by Imperialist and consumer desire then representation becomes the site of the violent homicide, killing off subjectivity with the commodification of difference. The viewer is not only presented with a double encounter between female and male but between the rational, modernist grid arrangement of Hollywood typologies and the irrational chaos of postmodern consumer culture, a commentary on the very debates between Modernism and kitsch, between the “West” and the “Other.”

Along with the video of the vessel hung at the back wall, the VHS tapes and the newspaper build upon the layers of meaning that determine the shrouded figure. The breaking and reconstructing of the vessel speaks to the endless loop of corporeal construction and destruction, the cycle of being made and remade in the popular imagination. It is not only an indictment of Hollywood, the media, and cultural institutions but of a public who consumes these fictional images as the real. González

emphasizes the importance of the installation medium in conveying these meta-links influencing subject formation saying works like *Scene of the Crime* invite people to occupy the space as the subject, working with the objects as,

indexical links to a larger social history of people and things...this social history of things is shown to 'situate' human subjects, to contribute to the processes of their subject formation and/or subjection. Installation art offers the frame to examine these processes and sometimes becomes the site for their critical restaging.<sup>45</sup>

Gonzalez's appraisal of the immersive and constitutive impact of the installation medium speaks equally to the *Scene's* attempt to engage the viewer across multiple registers of experience—as a subconscious, sensual, spatial, and political subject—within a saturation of representations that render visible their arbitrary construction.

If the show's reviewers missed the complex discursive play at work in the show, it was partly because our critical world was not ready for this new field of artistic production. They failed to realize their role in the work as an actor in a fictional world of layered iconography—a world where one reads images and objects through free association, activated by a sense of shock, identification, repulsion, and even confusion. Through the immersive experience of the installation, the activated beholder explores the various relationships prompted by the deceased woman, who is cloaked from view amidst a world of representations that compete to define her. Echoing art historian Huey Copeland's exploration of "invisibility and projection" in Lorna Simpson's *Guarded Conditions* (1989), the viewers of the *Scene of a Crime* take up various positions as victims, accomplices, witnesses, and even criminals in a history of "undisclosed transgressions," given access to the shrouded female but unable to enter given the parameters set by the yellow tape and the viewer's degree of engagement.<sup>46</sup>

The answer to the parenthetical question (*Whose Crime?*), then, involves mining the in/visible elements of this fictional tableau for its "representational possibilities."<sup>47</sup> Situated between art and reality (or the simulacrum and real, image and object, particular and universal), *Scene of the Crime (Whose Crime?)* constructs the very mediation of identity through cultural representation in all of tangible and intangible variations. Osorio's *embelequero* aesthetic not only highlights this mediation but creates a complicated subject who is figured through in/visibility: *chucherías* and print culture serve as surrogates for the shrouded figure's gender, class, race, and nationality. In spite of these cultural clues, her identity remains obscured within a profusion of forms that spill out towards the edges of the installation. Osorio's critique of cultural representation as consumer spectacle makes plain the self-perpetuating circuit of cultural production-consumption: how what we see, or consume, in the visual world can co-opt our thoughts and behaviors, inform our consumer habits,

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and come to define our sense of individuality and group bonds. In/visibility enacts the reality-fantasy of identity-formation while explicitly challenging corporatized identity categories against more complex notions of subjectivity.

However, if the shrouded figure is an allegory of the ravages of modernity, meeting the viewer as the subject-forming “Other,” then what are we to make of her demise? Is this the site of a domestic homicide, as indicated in the dining room newspaper? Did her material accumulation kill her? Was it Hollywood and the cultural institutions that finished her? Does she cease to exist as a harbinger of our postmodern humanity? Or, does our reading need to move beyond the surface of death to what can or must emerge, perhaps, a proposed new birth or new way of seeing? If we read the story being told at the site of the body, then we can position hybrid figures such as Oshún, the giver of life, and San Lázaro, the resurrected, as storytellers of her awakening.



Figure 5. Francisco Oller, *El Velorio (The Wake)*, 1893, oil on canvas, 96 x 156.5 inches, Collection of Museo de Historia, Antropología y Arte, Universidad de Puerto Rico, San Juan. Public Domain.

I conclude by returning to the ritual spectacle depicted in Oller's *El Velorio* created exactly one century before Osorio's contemporary installation because it may offer some productive points of comparison for understanding the shrouded figure's demise. (Figure 5) Like the *Scene of the Crime*, *El Velorio* takes place in a (working-class) home, centers around a deceased figure, and is filled with signs of cultural and national identity while symbolically and compositionally employing a number of in/visible tensions. Walls neatly inventoried with period-specific objects contrast against indigenous foods hanging from ceiling beams, creating a “native” backdrop for a crowded event presided over by Spanish Church officials. A figure on the left plays a colonial guitar between a pair playing the Taíno maraca and *güiro*.

On the right, a native wooden *duho* (ceremonial chair) appears next to a lacquered chair of the colonial era. At the center, a ray of light squeezing through the wall planks shines a spotlight on an old man with a cane, who solemnly stands over a deceased child on a table covered in white lace and flowers. The observant *jibaro* calls attention to the distracted clergymen directly opposite him, who are inattentive to the ritual and fixated on the decadent feast. Oller describes this clerical greed in a show text in which he denounces the Church for its appropriation of local customs and describes the *baquiné* scene as “an orgy of brutish appetites under the guise of gross superstition.” The allegorized child calls attention to Oller’s critique of colonial hegemony, and like the shrouded woman of the *Scene*, positions the beholder of the life-sized tableau. Considering Osorio’s impactful experience with the work, it is not surprising that it was the *jibaro* with whom he most identified. More than a symbol of the colonial “Other,” who must shoulder the coeval burden of racism and classism, the Afro-Puerto Rican *jibaro* is the only figure mindful of the fall of his people to the exploits of imperialist expansion.<sup>48</sup>

Painted only five years before the Spanish-American War and the cession of Puerto Rico to the U.S. (1898), *El Velorio* offers a clear analysis of the center-periphery (colonizer-colonized) dynamic rendered by the native presence in a waning Spanish colonial world. This dialectic is visualized in the juxtaposition of native and modern objects and furniture as well as the peasant-bourgeoisie relation. Literary historian, Ramón E. Soto-Crespo interprets this iconography as symbolic of late colonial Spanish rule in Puerto Rico, saying, “it figures the truncated possibility of a nation in its youth and shows the mourning of a redundant space of thwarted possibilities.” Soto-Crespo’s passage becomes clearer when read against the economic and political context of the time in which Spanish taxation, plantation monopolies, and colonial reforms caused extreme economic and civic disparities resulting in pro-independence uprisings and the island’s first political parties. It represents not only the collapse, or death, of a young Spanish nation in turmoil, but an emerging “national aesthetic consciousness” caught in the tension of the Manichean world in crisis.<sup>49</sup> Not dissimilar to *El Velorio*, the shrouded figure of the *Scene of the Crime* represents the death of an old order of representation and an emerging aesthetic consciousness caught in a critical moment in Puerto Rico-U.S. history. Osorio expands Oller’s colonial (modern?) commentary with a postmodern inflection using recycled forms and traditional motifs to critique consumer subjectivation in a Late-Capitalist world.

In the end, the fantasy of the *Scene* speaks through a culturally specific lens (idiom) to amplify a larger critique relevant today, about the ways we are made and remade in the age of consumer culture. As an installation of a fictional Puerto Rican home staged within the galleries of a U.S. American museum, the *Scene of the Crime* facilitates this critique by displacing private and public spaces to create a new field of meaning and shifted perception. In this alternative world, the viewer is overwhelmed by the



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chaos and decorative excess surrounding the deceased protagonist whose crime they are implored to solve. *Emblequero* forms, like the Baroque fear of empty space, corroborate modern and postmodern fears of loss and displacement, anxieties transposed onto the domestic site of conspicuous consumption. Within the in/visible interstices of material surplus, The *Scene's emblequero* aesthetic also reveals the evidence of things unseen: the producers, regulators, and systems of cultural representation and subject formation.

By doing so, the installation invites the viewer to contemplate the lasting impact of colonial-consumer desire on the Other prostrate before them. Signifying both the end of her subjectivity and the conclusion of her commodification, the Other's murdered body becomes an embodiment of the viewer's alienation within a world of spectacle. However, if Osorio's *emblequero* aesthetic teaches us anything, it teaches us that the edifice we call Self is fundamentally constructed and can also be remade. Further, *emblequero* elements—like the looping video, hybrid deities, portraits of community members, and photo of Belpré—hint at an unfinished story in need of recreation. As makers in our own right, we might envision new “social architectures” in which difference is remade as a critical form of agency and collaborative process of community building.

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### NOTES

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<sup>2</sup> González, *Pepón Osorio*, 34.

<sup>3</sup> Michael Kimmelman, “Art View: At the Whitney, Sound, Fury, and Little Else,” *The New York Times*, April 25, 1993, 1-4; Roberta Smith, “At the Whitney, A Biennial With A Social Conscience,” *The New York Times*, March 5, 1993, C1.

<sup>4</sup> Roger Kimball, “Of Chocolate, Lard, and Politics,” *National Review*, April 26, 1993, 55; Luis Camnitzer, “The Whitney Biennial,” *Third Text* Vol. 7, No. 23 (1993): 128; Rober

Hughes, "A fiesta of whining," *Time* Vol. 141, No. 2, April 22, 1993, 68.

<sup>5</sup> Camnitzer, "The Whitney Biennial," 130; Kimmelman, "At the Whitney," 2 & 4.

<sup>6</sup> The following scholars have contributed to my understating of in/visibility: Krista Thompson, "The Evidence of Things Not Photographed: Slavery and Historical Memory in the British West Indies," *Representations* Vol. 113 (Winter 2001): 39-71; Huey Copeland, "Bye, Bye Black Girl: Lorna Simpson's Figurative Retreat," *Art Journal* Vol. 64 No. 2 (Summer, 2005): 62-77; Stuart Hall's "articulation" theory of cultural processes—production, regulation, representation, identity, and consumption—see Paul Du Gay et al., *Doing Cultural Studies; The Story of the Sony Walkman* 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Los Angeles: Sage, 2013), xxx.

<sup>7</sup> González, *Pepón Osorio*, 6.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>9</sup> González, *Pepón Osorio*, 10. *El Velorio (The Wake)* was exhibited in the Paris Salon of 1895. It is now housed at the Museum of Anthropology and History of the University of Puerto Rico. See Edward Sullivan, "Chapter Two: Francisco Oller at Home and Abroad," in *From San Juan to Paris and Back: Francisco Oller and Caribbean Art in the Era of Impressionism* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2014), 80.

<sup>10</sup> Sullivan, "Francisco Oller," 47.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 81.

<sup>12</sup> González, "*Pepón Osorio*," 10.

<sup>13</sup> For Osorio's activism with UBP, see González, *Pepón Osorio*, 3. The film, starring Paul Newman, was directed by Daniel Petrie and was controversial among police for its portrayal of a "bad cop" while also being controversial with Black and Puerto Rican Americans for its racist depictions. See Paul Skenazy, "Plots That Go Bang in the Dark," *The Threepenny Review* No. 8 (Winter, 1982): 26-27.

<sup>14</sup> For the "politics of representation" see Stuart Hall, "New Ethnicities," in *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*, ed. David Morley et al. (New York: Routledge, 1996), 441-449; Ella Shohat and Robert Stam, "Stereotype, Realism and the Struggle Over Representation," in *Unthinking Eurocentrism: Multiculturalism And The Media* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 178-219.

<sup>15</sup> González, *Pepón Osorio*, 14-15 & 18-21.

<sup>16</sup> Susana Torruella Leval, "Introduction," in *Con To'lo Hierros* (New York: El Museo del Barrio, 1991), 3 & 22; González, *Pepón Osorio*, 4-5.

<sup>17</sup> González, *Pepón Osorio*, 4-5.

<sup>18</sup> Félix Joaquín Rivera, "Why More Is Better," in *Con To'lo Hierros*, 37; González, *Pepón Osorio*, 6; Chon Noriega, *Pepón Osorio*, 1; Marvette Pérez and Yvonne Lassalle, "Interview with Pepón Osorio," *Radical History Review* Vol. 73, No. 4-21 (1999): 4-5 & 14.

<sup>19</sup> González, "*Pepón Osorio*," 91-92.

<sup>20</sup> Anna Indych, "Nuyorican Baroque: Pepón Osorio's Chucherías," *Art Journal* Vol. 60, No. 1 (Spring, 2001): 73; Coco Fusco, "Vernacular Memories," *Art in America* Vol. 79 No. 12 (December 1991): 99.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 73-74.

<sup>22</sup> González, *Pepón Osorio*, 91.

<sup>23</sup> "Mode d'emploi du détournement" (The User's Guide to Détournement) was originally published in the Belgian surrealist journal *Les Lèvres Nues* #8 (May 1956); Also see "Guy Debord: Guide psychogéographique de Paris. Discours sur les passions de l'amour, 1957,"

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FRAC Centre-Val De Loire, accessed May 15, 2019, <http://www.frac-centre.fr/en/authors/rub/rubworks-318.html?authID=53&ensembleID=135&oeuvreID=652>; The legacy continues today in recent shows like *Corpocracy* (Houston, 2016) and *The Museum of Capitalism* (Oakland, 2017), which explore the ongoing realities and fantasies of consumer culture.

<sup>24</sup> Tomás Ybarra-Frausto, "The Chicano Movement/The Movement of Chicano Art," in *Resisting Categories: Latin American and/or Latino?* (Museum of Fine Arts Houston, International Center for the Arts of the Americas, 2012), 1032-1033; Chicano scholar Ybarra-Frausto describes "Los de abajo" as an "underdog" worldview of survival and adaptability; see Holly Barnet-Sanchez, "Tomás Ybarra-Frausto and Amalia Mesa-Bains: A Critical Discourse from Within," in *Art Journal*, Vol. 64, No. 4 (Winter, 2005), 92; Joan Ross Acoella, "Osorio's Plastic Heaven," *Artforum* Vol. 30 (January 1992): 65; Rivera, "Why More Is Better," 37.

<sup>25</sup> Elizabeth Armstrong, "Impure Beauty," in *Ultrabaroque: Aspects of Post-Latin American Art*, Museum of Contemporary Art, San Diego, 2000), 4-5; Armstrong and Victor Zamudio-Taylor, "Franco Mondini Ruiz," in *Ultrabaroque*, 69.

<sup>26</sup> Tirzo Martha (Curaçao) Dimitri Obergfell (United States) Jose Castellón (Panama), and Miguel Luciano (United States).

<sup>27</sup> Maura Reilly, *Curatorial Activism: Towards An Ethics Of Curating* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2018), 98-157; For a review of the 1995 Whitney Biennial see M. Kimmelman, "A Quirky Whitney Biennial," *New York Times* (March 24, 1995); Caroline V. Wallace, "Exhibiting Authenticity: The Black Emergency Cultural Coalition's Protests of the Whitney Museum of American Art, 1968-71," *Art Journal* No. 2 (Summer, 2015): 1.

<sup>28</sup> In addition to Sussman, curators for the show included Thelma Golden, John G. Hanhardt, Lisa Philips, and Jeanette Vuocolo; see Reilly, *Curatorial Activism*, 124-26; Camnitzer, "The Whitney Biennial," 128; Hughes, "A fiesta of whining"; Kimball, "Of Chocolate, Lard, and Politics," 54-56; Kimmelman, "Sound, Fury, and Little Else"; Jennifer González and Chon Noriega, "Peposo! A Conversation with Pepón Osorio," filmed May 16, 2014 at *Centro de Estudios Puertorriqueños*, Hunter College, City University of New York, New York City, video, run time 1:44:08, <https://centrop.r.hunter.cuny.edu/events-news/events/meet-author/peposo-conversation-pepon-osorio>; Smith, "A Biennial With A Social Conscience," C1; Also see head curator Elisabeth Sussman's reflection on the Biennial in "Then and Now," *Art Journal* No. 64 (Spring, 2005): 74-79; For an overview of the 1993 Whitney Biennial see Judith Wilson, "Tackling White Privilege and Western-Centrism" in *Curatorial Activism*, ed. Maura Reilly (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2018), 124-129.

<sup>29</sup> Hughes, "A fiesta of whining," 68.

<sup>30</sup> Kimmelman, "At the Whitney," 2-3.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>32</sup> Smith, "A Biennial with a Social Conscience," C1.

<sup>33</sup> González, *Pepón Osorio*, 2; Hughes, "A fiesta of whining," 68; Kimmelman, "Sound, Fury, and Little Else," 1993; Smith, "A Biennial With A Social Conscience," C1.

<sup>34</sup> Sussman, "Then and Now," 75; Susan Muchnic, "King Beating Footage Comes to the Art World," *Los Angeles Times*, March 10, 1993, [http://articles.latimes.com/1993-03-10/entertainment/ca-1355\\_1\\_art-world](http://articles.latimes.com/1993-03-10/entertainment/ca-1355_1_art-world).

<sup>35</sup> Shifra M. Goldman, "Latin American Art's U.S. Explosion," in *Resisting Categories: Latin American and/or Latino?* (Houston: Yale University Press, 2012), 903; bell hooks and

Amalia Mesa-Bains, *homegrown: engaged cultural criticism*, (Boston: South End Press, 2006), 82.

<sup>36</sup> Artist-activist included the Black Emergency Cultural Coalition, the Art Workers' Coalition, New York "Art Strike" against War Repression, Racism, and Sexism, and the Ad Hoc Women Artists' Committee; See Wallace, "Exhibiting Authenticity," 5.

<sup>37</sup> González, *Pepón Osorio*, 2 & 31.

<sup>38</sup> González and Noriega, "Peposo!," 34:01.

<sup>39</sup> Marilisa Jiménez-García, "Pura Belpré Lights the Storyteller's Candle: Reframing the Legacy of a Legend and What it Means for the Fields of Latino/a Studies and Children's Literature," *Centro Journal* Vol. 25 No 1 (Spring, 2014): 123.; Belpré's first 1932 publication, *Pérez y Martina*, recounts an inter-species folktale about lovely cockroach and dapper mouse that happily marry only to succumb to a tragedy of greed.

<sup>40</sup> Homi Bhabha, *Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 178.

<sup>41</sup> Photographs of the *Scene of the Crime* at the 1993 Whitney Biennial were commissioned by Osorio and taken by photographer Frank Gimpaya. A 2003 version of the *Scene of the Crime* was installed at the Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Puerto Rico (San Juan) and had a slightly different arrangement according to the photos. See, "Scene of the Crime (Whose Crime?)," Interview with Pepón Osorio," in *Art in the Twenty-First Century*, Season 1, episode "Place," 2001, <https://art21.org/read/pepon-osorio-scene-of-the-crime-whose-crime/>

<sup>42</sup> González, *Pepón Osorio*, 37; Cited from Lilliana Ramos and Manuel Alvarez Lezama, "Hollywood Kills: Performance of a Do-It-Yourself Dialog Kit," in *Pepón Osorio: De Puerta en Puerta/Door to Door*, ed. Marimar Benítez (San Juan: Museo de Arte de Puerto Rico, 2000), 76. Indych, "Nuyorican Baroque," 74; Cited from Celeste Olalquiaga, *Megalopolis: Contemporary Cultural Sensibilities* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992), 83-84.

<sup>43</sup> Tiffany Ana López, "Imagining Community: Video in the Installation Work of Pepón Osorio," in *Art Journal* Vol. 54, No. 4 (1995): 58; Copeland, "Bye, Bye Black Girl," 68.

<sup>44</sup> González, *Pepón Osorio*, 1 & 33; López, "Imagining Community," 59.

<sup>45</sup> Jennifer González, "Introduction," in *Subject To Display: Reframing Race in Contemporary Installation Art* (Cambridge: MIT, 2008.), 10; Claire Bishop, *Installation Art: A Critical History* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 11.

<sup>46</sup> Copeland, "Bye, Bye Black Girl," 68.

<sup>47</sup> Thompson, "The Evidence," 39.

<sup>48</sup> González, *Pepón Osorio*, 34; Sullivan, "Francisco Oller," 86.

<sup>49</sup> César Ayala and Rafael Bernabe, "Introduction" and "1898—Background and Immediate Consequences," in *Puerto Rico in the American Century: A History Since 1898* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 1-32; Sullivan, "Francisco Oller," 81-83; Cited from Ramón E. Soto-Crespo: "'The Pains of Memory': Mourning the Nation in Puerto Rican Art and Literature," *MLN* Vol. 112, No. 2 Hispanic Issue (March, 2002): 451.