

IMAGES OF GENDER IN THE AIAPE'S MAGAZINES: RIOPLATENSE ANTIFASCISM THROUGH FEMALE FIGURES

DIANA FLATTO, University of Pittsburgh

Imágenes de género en las revistas de la AIAPE: El antifascismo rioplatense a través de figuras femeninas

Imagens de gênero nas revistas da AIAPE: o antifascismo rio-platense através de figuras femininas

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DIANA FLATTO

PhD student, University of Pittsburgh. MA,
CUNY Hunter College. BA, Brandeis University.
dlf62@pitt.edu

ABSTRACT:

Antifascist visual culture in the 1930s and 1940s was rife with images of women and children. In Argentina and Uruguay, between 1935 and 1943, artists Raquel Forner, María Rosa de Ferrari, and Antonio Berni reproduced works in three periodicals published by the Agrupación de Intelectuales, Artistas, Periodistas y Escritores (Association of Intellectuals, Artists, Journalists, and Writers, AIAPE). A study of this imagery through a feminist lens reveals the extent to which these artists' visual production both supported and diverged from the magazines' political ideologies.

KEYWORDS:

antifascism, feminism, magazines, visual culture.

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RESUMEN:

La cultura visual antifascista de las décadas de 1930 y 1940 estaba plagada de imágenes de mujeres y niños. En Argentina y Uruguay, entre 1935 y 1943, las y los artistas Raquel Forner, María Rosa de Ferrari y Antonio Berni reprodujeron obras en tres periódicos publicados por la Agrupación de Intelectuales, Artistas, Periodistas y Escritores (AIAPE). Una investigación de estas reproducciones a través de una perspectiva feminista revela en qué medida la producción visual de estos artistas apoyaba y divergía de las ideologías políticas de las revistas.

PALABRAS CLAVE:

antifascismo, feminismo, revistas, cultura visual.

RESUMO:

A cultura visual antifascista das décadas de 1930 e 1940 estava repleta de imagens de mulheres e crianças. Na Argentina e no Uruguai, entre 1935 e 1943, os artistas Raquel Forner, María Rosa de Ferrari e Antonio Berni reproduziram trabalhos em três jornais publicados pela Associação de Intelectuais, Artistas, Jornalistas e Escritores (AIAPE). Uma investigação dessas reproduções por uma perspectiva feminista revela até que ponto a produção visual dessas artistas apoiou e divergiu das ideologias políticas das revistas.

PALAVRAS CHAVE:

antifascismo, feminismo, revistas, cultura visual.

“The association is called AIAPE, and it's leftist;
it seems to me that just being a member
I have gained a lot in militancy”
—Emma Barrandéguy, *Habitaciones*¹

INTRODUCTION

Examining the portrayal of women and children in antifascist magazines expands our understanding of the sociopolitical values of political organizers. In Argentina and Uruguay, between 1935 and 1943, artists Raquel Forner, María Rosa de Ferrari, and Antonio Berni reproduced works in three periodicals published by the Agrupación de Intelectuales, Artistas, Periodistas y Escritores (Association of Intellectuals, Artists, Journalists, and Writers, hereafter AIAPE): *Unidad. Por la defensa de la cultura* (Unity: For the Defense of Culture, January 1936-January 1938); *AIAPE. Por la defensa de la cultura* (AIAPE: For the Defense of Culture, November 1936-May 1942); and *Nueva gaceta. Revista de la Agrupación de Intelectuales, Artistas, Periodistas y Escritores* (New Gazette: Magazine of the Association of Intellectuals, Artists, Journalists, and Writers, May 1941-June 1943). Their contributions highlight the importance of figural visual art to political movements and their publications, as well as the impact of such movements on the production of visual art. The study of art in Latin American magazines is a burgeoning field, as evidenced by scholarship in recent years as well as the current special issue of *H-Art*.² Yet, until now, the AIAPE has mainly been studied from a historical and literary standpoint.³ Women appeared more often in the AIAPE's imagery than in their texts, both as artists and subjects. An examination of the AIAPE's visual art allows for a more nuanced feminist analysis of how artists created imagery that contributed to ideals of a nationalist future through their portrayal of women, family structures, and race.

Magazine editors and their collaborators selected artists and their images to illustrate the political writings published in their pages. This study takes into account how the meaning of the artworks was informed by the texts they accompanied. In many cases, paintings and drawings were reproduced in issues published years after they were initially created. This strategy differed from contemporary political and cultural periodicals such as *Antinazi* (1945-1946), which published mainly political cartoons and documentary photographs, or *Saber vivir* (1940-1956), where artists were commissioned for illustrations of specific articles. An analysis of realisms in artworks in the AIAPE publications expands our understanding of the afterlives of visual artworks as they traveled through modernist networks.

1. La asociación se llama AIAPE, y es de izquierda; me parece que de solo ser miembro ya tengo mucho de ganado en la militancia.” Emma Barrandéguy, *Habitaciones* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones la Parte Maldita, 2002) 116.

2. See, for instance, Beverly Adams and Natalia Majluf, *The Avant-Garde Networks of Amauta: Argentina, Mexico, and Peru in the 1920s* (Austin: Blanton Museum of Art, 2019); Patricia Artundo, *Arte en revistas. Publicaciones culturales en la Argentina, 1900-1950* (Rosario: Beatriz Viterbo Editora, 2008); Lori Cole, *Surveying the Avant-Garde: Questions on Modernism, Art, and the Americas in Transatlantic Magazines* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2018); and Harper Montgomery, *The Mobility of Modernism: Art and Criticism in 1920s Latin America* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2017).

3. See James Cane, “‘Unity for the Defense of Culture’: The AIAPE and the Cultural Politics of Argentine Antifascism, 1935-1943,” *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 77, n°. 3 (1997): 443-82; and Ricardo Pasolini, “El nacimiento de una sensibilidad política. Cultura antifascista,

A study of this imagery through a feminist lens reveals the extent to which these artists' visual production both participated in and diverged from the political ideologies of the groups behind such publications. Antifascist groups were born from a shared commitment to resist increasingly authoritarian governments, rather than from commonly-held political beliefs; they drew their ranks from mainstream, socialist, and communist parties alike.⁴ An analysis of the futurity represented in the works reproduced by Forner, De Ferrari, and Berni in the AIAPE magazines suggests that their values were more in line with those of liberalism than with those of the group's more radical members.⁵ Their works advocate for the nineteenth-century ideal of a democratic government, which had been fractured by recent events, rather than for revolutionized Argentine and Uruguayan political and social structures.

AIAPE: "LA DEFENSA DE LA CULTURA"

The AIAPE was active for much of Argentina's "infamous decade" when, between 1930-1943, the country experienced a series of coups, election fraud, and corrupt governments. Throughout this time, artists and writers responded and contributed to the tense political climate through their work. The AIAPE was founded in 1935 in Buenos Aires following the arrest of communist writer Raúl González Tuñón under the presidency of Agustín Pedro Justo (1932-1938), and shut down in 1943 after a police raid of their headquarters as a result of a military coup. Their activities included holding conferences for antifascist activism and publishing two magazines. Chapters were also established with their own publications and events in other cities and countries including Montevideo, Uruguay. The core of the work carried out by AIAPE members was to defend culture and freedom of expression, as stated in the subtitle of their first two magazines: "*la defensa de la cultura*" (the defense of culture). This was a direct response to the jailing of González Tuñón and expressed a grave concern for the fate of progressive individuals affiliated with universities, museums, and the press. Although the organization was ultimately shut down by the military police—in a sense failing to defend culture from fascism—its imagery remains a testament to their aspirations for a future free from political suppression.

The first magazine to be published by the AIAPE was *Unidad. Por la defensa de la cultura*, issued in Buenos Aires from January, 1936 to January, 1938. Its design includes a heading with the title in a bold, sans serif block print, with the subtitle running across the center of the type (after the second issue the subtitle interrupts the title through a band of negative space). The cover images of early issues were mostly woodcuts, echoing earlier avant-garde magazines such as *Proa*, while interior spreads include photo reproductions of paintings and

comunismo y nación en la Argentina: entre la AIAPE y el Congreso Argentino de la Cultura, 1935-1955," *Desarrollo económico* 45, n°. 179 (2005): 403-33.

4. For a thorough discussion of this period's political and artistic circles, see Noé Jitrik, "A la sombra de Boedo," *Claridad. La vanguardia en lucha* (Buenos Aires: Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, 2012), 35-39.

5. Theorists including Lee Edelman and José Esteban Muñoz have examined futurity as a heteronormative expectation of reproduction, one that places value on the traditional family structure to carry these ideals into subsequent generations. See Lee Edelman, "The Future Is Kid Stuff: Queer

drawings. The illustrations were mainly figurative, ranging from expressionistic to social-realist pieces. Its design places *Unidad* within a lineage of vanguard magazines in Argentina and across Latin America in the 1920s, not only referencing *Proa* but also *Amauta* in Lima, *Horizonte* in Mexico City, *Revista de avance* in Havana, and numerous others. They were also active during the period in which the USSR's Popular Front spurred Stalinist cultural production around the world.⁶ When the covers are examined together as a group, the AIAPE's *Unidad* is more similar to a newspaper format, with columns of text surrounding an illustration, than to magazines in which one single image dominates the cover. This design privileges the publication's verbal content, which is in line with the AIAPE's more ideological drive, as is discussed more fully below.

Shortly after *Unidad* was started in Buenos Aires, the Montevideo chapter of the organization began publishing their own magazine, *AIAPE. Por la defensa de la cultura*, which ran from November 1936 to May 1942, with a second version running until August 1948.⁷ This activity took place during a series of dictatorial regimes in Uruguay that started after a military coup in 1933 and lasted until 1942, to an extent mirroring the events unfolding during the same decade in Argentina. *AIAPE*'s design consisted of a color heading with figurative illustrations and issue numbers reproduced in the same color. Compared with *Unidad*, *AIAPE*'s design privileged photo reproduction and line drawings, with only a few woodcut covers. The heading designs of *Unidad* and *AIAPE* resembled each other, suggesting a cohesive identity, although each was edited by separate local boards. This common identity extends to the magazines' respective content, which was aligned not only in politics but in their editors' aesthetic choices.

Three years after *Unidad* ceased publication, the Buenos Aires chapter of the AIAPE launched the culture magazine *Nueva gaceta. Revista de la Agrupación de Intelectuales, Artistas, Periodistas y Escritores*, which ran from May 1941 to June 1943. The cover design departs from the uniformity of *Unidad* and *AIAPE*, with a narrow, serif font heading with alternating italicization. Although the headings are in color, the cover illustrations—including reproductions of artworks, drawings, and prints—are all in black and white.

The AIAPE's publications include a range of imagery intended to further their antifascist cause. The organization's activities intersected with those of other antifascist and communist groups motivated by issues of identity including race, religion, and gender, such as the Comité Contra el Racismo y el Antisemitismo de la Argentina (The Argentine Committee Against Racism and Antisemitism) and the Agrupación Mujeres Contra la Guerra (Organization of Women Against War, hereafter AMClAG).⁸ Although feminism was not a central focus of AIAPE literature, women and their familial roles were often the subject of the artwork reproduced in their publications, reflecting connections with women's groups

Theory, Disidentification, and the Death Drive," *Narrative* 6, n.º. 1 (1998): 18-30; José Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (New York: New York University Press, 2009), 1-3.

6. See Andrew Hemingway, *Artists on the Left: American Artists and the Communist Movement, 1926-1956* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002); Helen Langa, *Radical Art: Printmaking and the Left in 1930s New York* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004).

like the AMClAG. An analysis of this imagery through a feminist lens allows us to better understand the gender politics of the left in the 1930s and 1940s, and how these politics were reflected in Argentina's modern art.

When the AIAPE launched their publications in 1935, the culture that its organizers sought to defend was a socially and politically active one; they were, in a sense, defending themselves. Prominent artists like those discussed in this study—Forner, De Ferrari, and especially Berni—used the tools of social realism to uplift local communities and criticize the systems and violence that were harmful to them. Artists in the 1930s often created images of mothers and children amidst trends to portray labor and class issues. A clear example of the cultural field in which the AIAPE operated is a 1940 spread in the Mexican magazine *Romance*, which features works by Berni, Norah Borges, Raúl Soldi, and Lino Spilimbergo, all of which depict mothers and children, either as a central motif—as in the works by Soldi and Spilimbergo—or as a component of a larger composition, as in Berni's *Chacareros*.⁹ While such imagery was common in Argentine realisms, it was especially visible in the pages of *Unidad*, *AIAPE*, and *Nueva gaceta*.

Artists' work gained additional meaning when it was reproduced in the AIAPE's magazines to promote resistance to fascism. Visual art accompanied articles covering current events, debates about cultural strategy, and political theory, informing our understanding of their imagery and of the AIAPE's cultural and political values. Their work was often published years after it was originally created, raising questions of temporality. As time passed, these artworks from an earlier moment continued to be utilized to imagine ideal futures for Argentina and Uruguay, as the nations faced ideological crossroads with intellectuals and political leaders divided by their understanding of fascism, democracy, and socialism.

RAQUEL FORNER: "EL DOLOR MATERNAL"

Raquel Forner, an artist known for her surrealist-leaning critiques of the Spanish Civil War and World War II in the 1930s and 1940s, was present in the pages of the AIAPE's publications on both sides of the Río de la Plata, making her one of the most visible women artists in the magazines.¹⁰ Although she was not active in feminist circles and was known to shirk classification as a woman artist, analyzing her work provides a woman's perspective in a field dominated by men.¹¹ During Forner's lifetime her paintings were viewed through the lens of motherhood due to her portrayal of the impact of war on female figures. For example, an article published in the popular women's lifestyle magazine *Vósotras* in 1945 was titled "Raquel Forner ha pintado el dolor maternal" (Raquel Forner has Painted Maternal Pain), an acknowledgment of mothers whose sons were lost to war in

7. Biblioteca Nacional de Uruguay, "A.I.A.P.E. (1937-)," accessed July 26, 2022, <http://bibliotecadigital.bibna.gub.uy:8080/jspui/handle/123456789/42650>.

8. *AIAPE declaración programática y 1a., 2a., 3a. y 4a. reuniones*, pamphlet, 1936.

9. Atilio Rossi, "Artes plásticas en la Argentina," *Romance*, July 1, 1940, 12.

10. Raquel Forner was part of *el grupo de París* (the Paris group) and prolific in Argentina from the 1920s until her death in 1988. Early scholarship on her work includes Joan Merli, *Raquel Forner* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Poseidón, 1952) and Guillermo Whitelow, *Raquel Forner* (Argentina: Ediciones de Arte Gaglianone, 1980). Recent studies have reinserted Forner into the Argentine art canon, including Georgina Gluzman, "Otras protagonistas del arte argentino. Las mujeres artistas en los Salones Nacionales (1924-1939)," *Revista do Instituto de Estudos Brasileiros*, n°. 71 (2018): 51-79; Diana Wechsler, *Raquel Forner* (Buenos Aires: Aguilar Colecciones, 2014); and on her later work the exhibition "Raquel Forner. Revelaciones espaciales, 1957-1987," Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Buenos Aires, November 30, 2022-February 26, 2023.

Europe.¹² While Forner indeed shed light on women's experiences of war, a close reading of how her work was redeployed in its Rioplatense context, via theories of futurity, reveals a deeper engagement with national values.

Forner's representation in the AIAPE's publications was often in the form of line drawings, studies for, or translations of her paintings, which were more legible in black and white print form than pixelated photo reproductions of the paintings themselves would have been. A 1940 illustration for the Uruguayan publication *AIAPE. Por la defensa de la cultura*, came from Forner's *España* series, paintings made in the late 1930s in response to the atrocities of



Image1. Raquel Forner, *Destinos*, 1939. Fundación Forner-Bigatti, Buenos Aires.

the Spanish Civil War (Img. 1). The work was made in 1939 and published the year after in *AIAPE*. Its title and series are not listed, detaching the image from its original intent. It is used instead to accompany a text about Luis C. Prestes, the Brazilian communist jailed under the Vargas regime from 1935-45 and whose Jewish wife was deported to Germany, where she was ultimately killed by the Nazis. The AIAPE addresses Prestes's imprisonment as a "*problema de América*" (a problem for America), thus situating itself as a participant in a pan-American anti-fascist movement.¹³

Forner's drawing features a nude female figure, save drapery over her hips, with truncated limbs and a downward gaze. Her torso is held in place against a black segment of wall by two disembodied, thick-fingered and male-coded hands above and below her misshapen breasts. Surrounding the central figure are miniature scenes of violence and its aftermath: a firing squad referencing Francisco Goya's 1814 painting *The Third of May, 1808* at the upper right includes the only full-figured men, as indicated by their trousers; an altercation between two figures in long skirts lies just below them; and at left four women lament the death of a child, the three at the rear holding their hands in "see no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil" gestures, with three additional bodies laid out behind them. The foreground includes a hand grasping wheat, a symbol of Argentina but also a reference to the fascist *fascio*, and a foot weighing down an illegible newspaper. The image and the article about Prestes are without a clear connection, though both express concern over fascist violence.

A feminist reading of this image as it was published in *AIAPE* reveals the paternalistic attitude of its editors. The implication of the headline, "*Problema de América*," is that the central figure symbolizes "*América*," the feminine region or motherland that has been—and continues to be—ravaged by men. "In the defense of culture" the AIAPE's male leadership falls into a heteronormative and patriarchal role: to protect the female-coded land from the threat of other men, in this case fascists. The lamentation scene at left is the only overt depiction of mother and child in Forner's illustration (a motif she revisits in other works, as will be discussed below). In the context of an article covering the threat to regional liberty presented by Prestes's imprisonment, Forner's drawing reads not as a criticism of war in Europe but as an imagining of the Americas under fascist rule. The deceased child is read as the loss of the democratic future that the AIAPE's editors desire.

The painting from which this work derived, *La victoria*, reveals modernist iconography and strategies that are illegible in Forner's line drawing (Img. 2). For instance, she utilizes a sculptural or mannequin form in place of a human figure, as was common in the work of surrealists like René Magritte and Giorgio de Chirico. Lost in the sketch's lack of color are the red wounds to the figure's neck

11. José Emilio Burucúa and Laura Malosetti Costa, "Iconografía de la mujer y lo femenino en la obra de Raquel Forner," in *Homenaje a Raquel*

La Libertad de Luis C. Prestes, Problema de América

Por Francisco R. Pintos

Un clamor inmenso se levanta del seno de las grandes multitudes desde todos los rincones del planeta exigiendo la libertad de Luis Carlos Prestes, el "Caballero de la Esperanza", que languidece entre las sombras espesas de una cárcel.

La oligarquía fascista que oprime al Brasil, vendida al imperialismo, se niega a soltar su presa. Aprieta fuertemente las manos contra las orejas para no escuchar las voces de protesta mundial, e imparte órdenes severas a los carceleros, bien elegidos y renovados de continuo. El excesivo trato con Prestes, aún cuando se posea alma de carcelero, es peligroso. Prestes irradia bondad, su acento suave posee un poder avasallador de convicción, dice cosas demasiado claras y justas arrastrando detrás de sí a cuantos le rodean.

No es sólo Prestes quien está en la cárcel: Todo el pueblo del Brasil vive dentro de un gigantesco presidio, respirando una atmósfera afianzada de crueldad y opresión. Prestes y los doce o catorce mil presos políticos, son, si acaso, la síntesis de la situación general del gran país del norte.

Y la situación del Brasil se proyecta intensamente sobre América, particularmente sobre América del Sur. La posición que ocupa el inmenso país lindando con la mayoría de las repúblicas sudamericanas, con ocho millones de kmts. cuadrados, con una población que sobrepasa el 50 % de la población de Sud América, dotado de un suelo y un subsuelo que atesora riquezas incalculables, ejerce influencia poderosa sobre los demás países, a extremo que sus problemas son nuestros problemas.

Dentro de las fronteras del Brasil se han librado y se libran algunas de las batallas más intensas

que registra la historia del imperialismo moderno. Agentes británicos, alemanes, japoneses, italianos y yanques se agitan sin cesar buscando conquistar las fuerzas más oscuras de la reacción nativa provocando choques desesperados para lograr su propio dominio, a través de dictaduras crueles ejercidas por los elementos corrompidos y dóciles de la oligarquía. Saben

que el que triunfe logrará, no solo el dominio del Brasil, de su comercio, de sus fuentes de materias primas, sino, también, el control del Continente.

Las luchas de liberación nacional del pueblo brasileño, cuyo abanderado es Luis Carlos Prestes, son, pues, nuestras propias luchas. He ahí por qué las amplias masas populares de América to-

man como centro de sus batallas la libertad de Prestes.

Los aspectos de estas luchas se transforman a medida que cambian las condiciones generales del mundo. Si al comienzo de la guerra que ensombrece a Europa, Asia y África estuvo orientada en el sentido de lograr la paz manteniendo al Continente fuera de la órbita del conflicto armado; hoy día que la guerra ronda nuestras costas, que los dos bandos imperialistas se esfuerzan en convertir el suelo y las aguas de América en teatro de sangrientos choques, y el imperialismo yankee, aprovechando la situación privilegiada en que lo ha colocado la guerra, se esfuerza en tomar posiciones decisivas, anulando nuestra soberanía, hoy día, decimos, asciende a un nuevo plano la lucha por la libertad del héroe ex-jefe de la Columna invicta.

Luis Carlos Prestes es uno de nuestros guías preferidos. El gran dirigente de las masas oprimidas es doblemente nuestro, de los intelectuales, porque es del pueblo y un intelectual de primera fila, un hombre de ciencia, estudioso incansable.

Los integrantes de la A.I.A.P.E., ocupan sin vacilaciones el puesto que les corresponde en la batalla que se desarrolla por devolver a Prestes la libertad seguros del éxito. Los pueblos del mundo en movimiento avasallador, arrancaron hace siete años del banquillo de los acusados al héroe de Leipzig, Dimitrov; el pueblo de América, en movimiento, devolvió a la Argentina a Rodolfo Ghioldi, uno de sus hijos predilectos; el empuje popular en ascenso quebrará las duras rejas de la cárcel de Río Janeiro para dar paso al "Caballero de la Esperanza".

Francisco R. Pintos



DIBUJO

Raquel Forner (Argentina)

Image 2. Raquel Forner, untitled drawing (study for *La victoria*, 1939, oil on canvas) published in AIAPE. *Por la defensa de la cultura* n.º. 34, December 1940, 4. Microfilm scan, New York Public Library, New York.

and sternum which contrast starkly with the white, marble-like form, as well as the blood-soaked ground in the foreground. The drawing highlights details in the background of the scene, such as the firing squad and the groupings of distressed women on either side of the central figure, although they differ in certain details. The lamentation in the painting is over a sapling growing out of the white outline of a figure, rather than the child itself, and an additional tree and building in the upper left of the painting are absent in the drawing. Another study for the painting includes a more detailed figure before the lamentation scene, the fallen child and repeating bodies behind them clothed in dresses or skirts to indicate their gender (Img. 3).¹⁴ Moreover, the drawing included in *AIAPE* lacks the elements of specificity that are present in the completed painting, such as the

Forner (Buenos Aires: Galería Jacques Martínez, 1990), 53-65.

Image 3. Raquel Forner, *La victoria*, 1939. Fundación Forner-Bigatti, Buenos Aires.



date “1939” on the newspaper in the foreground. These differences enabled the AIAPE to repurpose Forner’s work for their commentary on fascism in Brazil and the rest of America.

Forner’s work was reproduced again the following year, in 1941, this time on a larger scale on the cover of *Nueva gaceta* (Img. 4). Along with this pride of place, the drawing was properly titled with the painting’s name, *Destinos* (Destinies, or Destinations), rather than solely as part of the *España* series. Here Forner’s work was once again used to illustrate texts about transnational solidarity, this time accompanying an article titled “La unidad de los escritores” (Writers’ Unity): a possible reference to the earlier publication *Unidad*.¹⁵ The text was penned by the prominent art critic Cayetano Córdova Iturburu, who was highly involved in the AIAPE’s activities and may have elected to illustrate his words with Forner’s work. It covers the Third Argentine Congress of Writers,

12. Mary Perla, “Raquel Forner ha pintado el dolor maternal,” *Vosotras*, December 7, 1945.

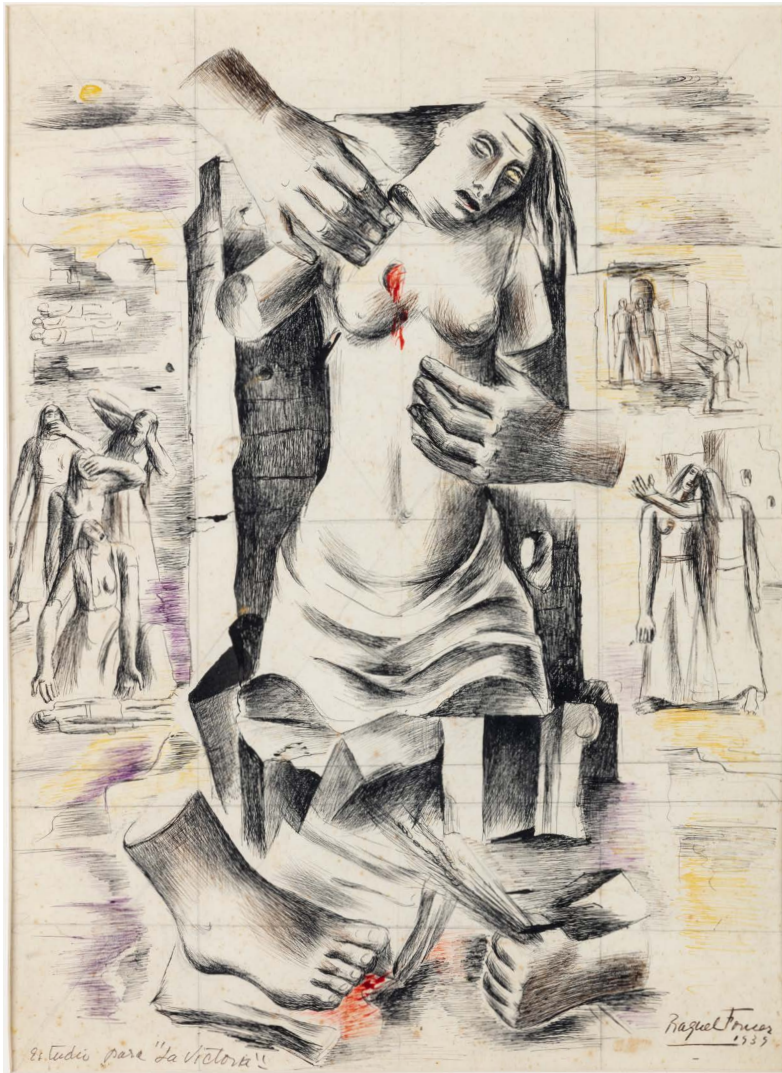


Image 4. Raquel Forner, *Estudio para "La victoria,"* 1939. Fundación Forner-Bigatti, Buenos Aires. Photo: Gustavo Sosa Pinilla.

which voted unanimously in solidarity with “people fighting against the totalitarian aggressor and conqueror” and in favor of a commitment to democratic liberties as threats of fascism increasingly entered public consciousness. The use of Forner’s work as illustration was similar in strategy to its deployment by the Uruguayan *AIAPF* a year earlier, showing the violence against women which came with war and fascism. The language used in Iturburu’s text implies that the collective statement issued by the writers was meant as a response to foreign conflicts, and the non-specific visual language in Forner’s work is in line with the congress and Iturburu’s generalized verbiage.

The line drawing *Destinos* amplifies a detail of *La victoria*, the mother mourning her child to the left of the central figure. In this version, the woman’s

chest is exposed to reveal the full, heavy breasts of a mother who has nursed children. The state of her clothing may also be an allusion to the sexual violence women endured at the hands of soldiers. She is seated before the jagged ruins of a brick wall, her disproportionately small face raised toward the sky with her eyes closed and hands outstretched, as if pleading with her destiny. The fallen figure is not a full body, as in the *La victoria* sketch, but the hollow torso of a mannequin with shadows at its waist and shoulders. Despite its inanimate form, the mannequin exhibits a wound down the length of its chest and has the face of a corpse, with its eyes closed and lips slightly parted. It also has long hair and the hint of adolescent breasts, unlike the genderless figure in the prior illustration. The mannequin rests on an open newspaper with fragments of illegible text, likely reporting the atrocities of war.

Both the sketch and the final painting *Destinos* (Img. 5) are Pietà scenes in which a mother mourns a mannequin-like child, made clear by its hollow form in the study and its marbleike coloring in the painting. The line drawing of *Destinos*,



Image 5. Raquel Forner, untitled drawing (study for *Destinos*, 1939), published in *Nueva gaceta. Revista de la Agrupación de Intelectuales, Artistas, Periodistas y Escritores* n°. 7, August 1941, 1. Centro de Documentación e Investigación de la Cultura de Izquierdas en Argentina, Buenos Aires.

as well as that of *La victoria*, underscores the placelessness of Forner's scenes, facilitating their repurposing by the editors of the AIAPE's publications. Like *La victoria*, the painting *Destinos* includes additional details that tie the narrative to its contemporary context. The newspaper in the painting reads "*GUERRA*" (WAR) and "*VÍCTIMAS*" (VICTIMS) above the date, 1939, and the artist's signature, making its thematic connection to the Spanish Civil War abundantly clear to a contemporary audience in Argentina. Because the study published in *Nueva gaceta* lacks these details, the fallen child can be extrapolated to represent the freedom from fascism of future generations, the subject of concern for the writers attending the congress.

By selecting these works to illustrate articles on current events in 1940 and 1941, the editors of *AIAPE* and *Nueva gaceta* imbued them with new, allegorical meaning. Forner's paintings emphasize a matrilineal genealogy, placing value on future generations, but specifically on future generations of women whose lives would be impacted by war and fascism. Her imagery suggests the consequences of war and its political threats beyond the loss of male lives in combat: sexual violence against women and girls, wives losing their husbands and mothers losing their children, and ultimately a loss of agency for women. The AIAPE, an organization whose Buenos Aires chapter was managed largely by men, redirects this female strife and imposes a male gaze on it. Women and girls become symbols for a feminine America or a feminine Argentina, both of which, in the context of the AIAPE's magazines, must be protected from fascism by men.

MARÍA ROSA DE FERRARI: ¿CIVILIZACIÓN?

María Rosa de Ferrari was an Uruguayan artist who, like Forner, painted in response to contemporary events.¹⁶ De Ferrari painted in a social-realist style and incorporated political commentary into her large-scale works, although she made a living working as a portrait painter.¹⁷ Although she was at times dismissed as a "female artist" for her attention to domestic scenes, De Ferrari's work appeared repeatedly in the pages of Montevideo's publication *AIAPE. Por la defensa de la cultura* due to its political content and to De Ferrari's connected position in the Uruguayan art scene.¹⁸ By examining her work in the context of its inclusion in the AIAPE's magazines, we can account for the significance of De Ferrari's contributions to artistic resistance amidst dictatorship in Uruguay and war abroad. Reading her work through a gendered lens, the content of her paintings proves to be in line with the AIAPE's visual identity across the Río de la Plata.

De Ferrari's work was first included in *AIAPE* as the sole illustration for an article covering an exhibition of women's art, "El Salón Femenino de Artes Plásticas" (The Women's Salón of Plastic Arts) (Img. 6). Although the exhibition

13. Francisco R. Pintos, "La libertad de Luis C. Prestes: problema de América," *AIAPE. Por la defensa de la cultura* n°. 34, December 1940, 4.

14. It is likely that this is the same drawing reproduced in *AIAPE*, with some details lost in the conversion to black and white and the process of reproduction.

15. Cayetano Córdova Iturburu, "La unidad de los escritores," *Nueva gaceta. Revista de la Agrupación de Intelectuales, Artistas, Periodistas y Escritores* 1, n°. 7, August 1941, 1.

16. María Rosa de Ferrari was active in Uruguay between the 1920s and 1950s. She is an

Image 6. María Rosa de Ferrari, *Untitled*, published in *AIAPE. Por la defensa de la cultura* n°. 9, October-November 1937, 9. Biblioteca Nacional de Uruguay.



segregated women artists from mainstream exhibition spaces, the AIAPE's coverage of the show indicated the editors' interest in gender issues. In fact, the AIAPE's board in Montevideo included a number of women: Luisa Luisi as second vice-president, Sofia Arzarello as secretary, and Clotilde Luisi de Podestá as press secretary, whose election was reported in the same issue as this coverage of the women's exhibition.¹⁹ Under this leadership, the AIAPE's critics lamented the use of "femenino" in the exhibition's title, noting that the qualifier undermined the strength of the works exhibited therein.

De Ferrari's work, which was reproduced without a title, demonstrates the high quality of the "women's art" exhibited in the salón. The painting is an idyllic pastoral scene depicting about a dozen young girls in a wooded leisure area. The children are mostly dressed in pale, knee-length dresses. Those in the foreground are engaged in a procession toward the right-hand side of the composition, where two girls are pictured in an embrace, their backs to the viewer. The older girl's arm is around the younger in a nurturing, maternal gesture. In the background, other girls engage in play, one on the left appears mid-throw in defiance of her dress.

under-studied artist but has received renewed attention as a result of feminist art historical efforts

Although the work does not seem to engage with the politics of fascism, De Ferrari has created a scene of innocence which plays into the AIAPE's defensive stance against dictatorship. The girls in her painting are an image of Uruguay's future women, as yet untouched by authoritarian nationalism.

De Ferrari's more clearly political paintings were later embraced by the AIAPE's Uruguayan chapter. In 1938, *AIAPE. Por la defensa de la cultura* published an article on the artist after her painting *¿Civilización?* (Civilization?) was excluded from the Salón Nacional de Bellas Artes (Img. 7). In "Fuera del salón oficial: una obra de la pintora María Rosa de Ferrari" (Excluded from the Official *Salón*: A Work by the Painter María Rosa de Ferrari), the critic Juvenal Ortiz Saralegui argues that the work was rejected not because its aesthetic quality failed to meet the *salón's* standards, but because the jury was controlled by the dictatorship of Gabriel Terra. Ortiz Saralegui raises concerns that the official *salón* censored artwork whose content criticized fascism, in De Ferrari's case by bringing attention to the Spanish Civil War.²⁰

¿Civilización? (Img. 8) is a raw portrayal of war-ravaged Spain. Like Forner, De Ferrari focuses on the anguish experienced by Spanish women. The

like "Archivo X – artistas uruguayxs" (<http://archivox uy/>).



Image 7. María Rosa de Ferrari, *¿Civilización?*, published in *AIAPE. Por la defensa de la cultura* nos. 19-20, September-October 1938, 3. Archivo Joaquín Aroztegui/International Center for the Arts of the Americas, The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston.



Image 8. Detail of María Rosa de Ferrari, *¿Civilización?*, published in *ALAPE. Por la defensa de la cultura* n°. 19-20, September-October 1938, 3. Archivo Joaquín Aroztegui/International Center for the Arts of the Americas, The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston.

central figure in the foreground faces away from the viewer with fists raised in the air, the corpse of a child at her feet. She is flanked by two kneeling women in headscarves, the one to the right with hands raised in prayer and the one to the left supporting the body of another casualty. The middle ground includes two mothers, both with their mouths open in pain, one cradling a swaddled baby and the other's child pulling at her shirt for attention. Behind them are additional mourners and corpses. The background of bombed-out buildings is dissected by an electric pole leaning at a diagonal, its wires cascading toward the ground. *ALAPE's* coverage states that the work was donated by De Ferrari to be raffled off by the Comisión de Damas Pro Ayuda al Pueblo Español (Commission of Ladies to Aid the People of Spain) to benefit the protection of Spanish women who had

17. Museo Nacional de Artes Visuales de Uruguay, "Acervo Del MNAV - María Rosa de

taken refuge in Uruguay.²¹ By including this detail, Ortiz Saralegui demonstrates how the AIAPE and its affiliates provided material support to victims of war and dictatorship, beyond their antifascist rhetoric.

In *AIAPE* the paintings of María Rosa de Ferrari were included in cultural coverage rather than as illustrations for news items, as Forner's were in both *AIAPE* and *Nueva gaceta*. As a result, their meaning is not separated from its original context. *AIAPE*'s editors were largely committed to visual art, its exhibition, and its dissemination through magazines as a strategy of antifascist resistance. Ferrari's work then contributes to the organization's overall visual identity without being divorced from her original intent, especially in the case of *¿Civilización?*. Both Forner's and Ferrari's work centers on women, and especially mothers and children, as victims of war or innocents to be protected. Through an analysis informed by queer futurity, we may argue that such imagery falls within a socially traditional defense of liberal, heteronormative culture.

While Forner and Ferrari were not the only women artists whose work contributed to the reaffirmation of this identity for the AIAPE, the majority of illustrations in their publications were the work of male artists. The following analysis interrogates how male artists utilized similar imagery and how the AIAPE manipulated it for its leftist cause.

ANTONIO BERNI: "HACIA UNA PLÁSTICA REVOLUCIONARIA"

Antonio Berni was one of the best-known artists to appear in the AIAPE's publications, where his work was repeatedly reproduced.²² Beginning in 1933, Berni championed the style he termed *nuevo realismo* (new realism), delivering his work to the masses through transportable easel painting and their reproductions in vehicles such as the AIAPE's magazines. As Guillermo Augusto Fanonti has written, this style emerged out of his time in Europe, where he studied Surrealism, followed by polemics in Argentina between *arte por el arte* (art for art's sake) and *arte comprometido* (politically engaged art). After the coup of 1930, Berni and others became further committed to politically and socially engaged content and aesthetics.²³ The AIAPE reproduced some of Berni's most monumental works in their pages, both within discussions of art's political power and, as with Forner's work, to illustrate articles on current events. Analyzing Berni's work as it was reproduced in the AIAPE's magazines and with a feminist lens brings a new perspective to this chapter in Rioplatense art history.

Berni's work was included in the pages of the first issue of *Unidad. Por la defensa de la cultura* in 1936 (Img. 9). It illustrated a text titled "Hacia una plástica revolucionaria" (Toward a Revolutionary Art). The article covered the AIAPE's first exhibition, including a list of participants that brought together

Ferrari," accessed July 25, 2022, <http://acervo.mnav.gub.uy/obras.php?q=na:603>.

18. J.M.P., "Página de crítica y polémica: El Salón Femenino de Artes Plásticas," in *AIAPE. Por la defensa de la cultura* 1, n°. 9, October-November 1937, 9.

19. The AIAPE, "Manifiesto del nuevo Comité Ejecutivo de la A.I.A.P.E.," *AIAPE. Por la defensa de la cultura* 1, n°. 9, October-November 1937, 12.

20. Juvenal Ortiz Saralegui, "Fuera del salón oficial: una obra de la pintora María Rosa de Ferrari,"

Image 9. Antonio Berni, *Desocupados*, 1934, published in *Unidad. Por la defensa de la cultura* n°. 1, January 1936, 13. Centro de Documentación e Investigación de la Cultura de Izquierdas en Argentina, Buenos Aires.



artists working in a variety of styles—including Berni, Juan Batlle Planas, Clément Moreau, Abraham Vigo, and others—united by their opposition to fascism. Berni's monumental canvas *Desocupados* (Unemployed) (Img. 10), from two years earlier, was included in the exhibition and chosen to represent the show.²⁴ The review of the exhibition was written by Córdova Iturburu, the same critic whose text on the writers' congress was illustrated by Forner's *Destino*. His article describes a range of work in the *salón*, from still life to abstraction, but he chose Berni to represent what he described as “*un arte verdadero*” (a true art) and “*el camino de un arte revolucionario*” (the path of a revolutionary art).²⁵

Unlike the examples by Forner, which were translated to print through line drawings, Berni's paintings were illustrated as photographic reproductions. Berni's style translated seamlessly to grayscale, the deep shadows in his subjects' faces and clothing lending themselves to the reproductive technologies of mass media. As Alejandro Anreus has written, Berni worked from photographs of his

AIAPE. *Por la defensa de la cultura* 2, n°. 19-20, September-October 1938, 3.

21. Juvenal Ortiz Saralegui, “Fuera del salón oficial,” 3.

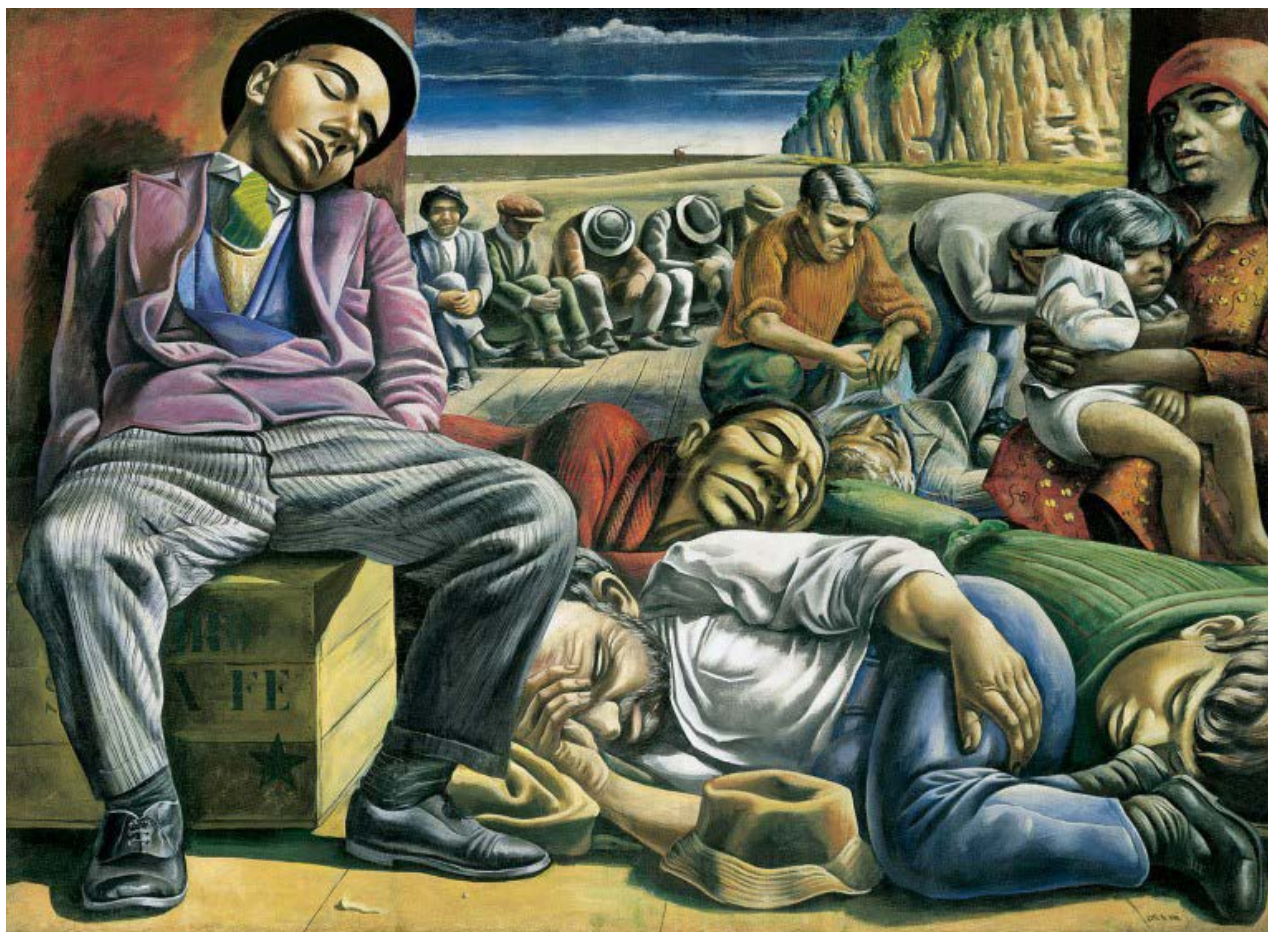


Image 10. Antonio Berni, *Desocupados* (Unemployed), 1934. Private collection.

subjects captured in Rosario with his Leica camera, a black and white medium to which his paintings would be retranscribed, as it were, in venues like *AIAPE*.²⁶ It is possible that the strategy of working from photographs is what allowed his works to be legible as they were photographically reproduced and distributed through magazines.

Desocupados, like many of Berni's paintings from the 1930s, depicts a diverse group of people whose needs are unmet by current systems. A young man in a disheveled suit dozes in the left foreground, seated on a crate reading "Santa Fe," the Argentine province of Berni's birth and where he worked, which could be read as representing an influx of provincial workers seeking work in the city.²⁷ Several male figures overlap in a reclining slumber across the remainder of the foreground, some with indigenous features, while others sit or nod off in the background before a mountainous landscape leading to the seaside. The right side of the landscape is cut off by the suggestion of a wall, before which sits a woman

22. Antonio Berni was a leading figure in Argentine art history. A noteworthy example of recent scholarship on his work is Roberto Amigo Cerisola, *Berni, narrativas argentinas* (Buenos Aires: Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, 2010).

23. Guillermo Augusto Fanonti, "Una revolución de los años 30 a partir de la obra de Antonio Berni. De la experiencia surrealista a la formulación del nuevo realismo," *Estudios sociales* 4, n.º. 1 (2005): 175-85; Cristina Rossi, *Antonio Berni:*

lecturas en tiempo presente (Buenos Aires: Editorial Universitaria de Buenos Aires and Editorial de la Universidad Nacional de Tres de Febrero, 2010).

24. The Berni work was captioned in *Unidad* as “*Desocupación*” (Unemployment) rather than the title known today, *Desocupados* (Unemployed).

holding a sleeping child. The woman is the only waking figure in the foreground; her job as mother does not halt for rest. By including her in this composition, Berni nods to the increasing numbers of women in the workforce, and perhaps the phenomenon of working women pursuing state-recognized rights via their roles as mothers.²⁸ He also participates in the discourse of futurity, emphasizing the impact of his current politics on the next generation. It is this imagery that Córdova Iturburu chose as the touchstone for “*una plástica revolucionaria*.”²⁹

Córdova Iturburu’s coverage of the AIAPE’s exhibition occupied the right-hand page of a spread on visual art. To its left was an article by the writer Héctor P. Agosti on Guillermo Facio Hebequer, an Uruguayan-born artist and printmaker working in Buenos Aires. Agosti’s article, subtitled “*Artista del proletariado*” (Artist of the Proletariat), described the importance of intellectual and political education in the production of a new visual art in Argentina such as that described by Córdova Iturburu in his article (Img. 11). The illustration



Image 11. Guillermo Facio Hebequer, *Madres*, published in *Unidad. Por la defensa de la cultura* 1, n.º. 1, January 1936, 12. Centro de Documentación e Investigación de la Cultura de Izquierdas en Argentina, Buenos Aires.

for this piece is an aquatint titled *Madres* (Mothers), a composition including studies of sixteen women and their children in various poses, some full-body and some only busts; the figures are holding swaddled babies, nursing, embracing young girls. The choice of illustration offers mothers as a proletarian subject, and Facio Hebequer's care in depicting maternal gestures places value on the act of mothering, although in a manner that is mediated by a male gaze. Viewing this print alongside Berni's *Desocupados* brings further attention to the figure of the mother on the right of his painting and highlights the importance of the notion that the AIAPE's values could be transmitted by mothers and thus inherited by the next generation of intellectuals.

Berni's work also appeared on the other side of the Río de la Plata, in the Montevideo chapter's publication *ALAPE*. In 1938, the Uruguayan magazine published an article titled "El mensaje de A. Berni" with an illustration of his major work from 1934, *Manifestación* (Demonstration; img. 12).³⁰ The text

25. Cayetano Córdova Iturburu, "Hacia una plástica revolucionaria," *Unidad. Por la defensa de la cultura* 1, n.º. 1, January 1936, 13.



Image 12. Antonio Berni, *Manifestación* (Demonstration), published in *ALAPE. Por la defensa de la cultura*, n.ºs. 19-20, September-October 1938, 7. Archivo Joaquín Aroztegui/International Center for the Arts of the Americas, The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston.

26. Alejandro Anreus, "Adapting to Argentinean Reality: The New Realism of Antonio Berni," in *The Social and the Real: Political Art of the 1930s in the Western Hemisphere*, edited by Alejandro Anreus, Diana L. Linden, and Jonathan Weinberg (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006), 97-112.

27. Although Berni's references came from Rosario, Santa Fe, they would also be viewed by a Porteño public.

affirms that Berni's ideological leanings were in line with his social-realist aesthetics, that is, they were in line with the more leftist antifascist politics of the AIAPE's magazine. The author, credited only as "V," writes repeatedly that Berni, and painting in general, "*debe ser fiel en su misión en la sociedad de los hombres*" (should be faithful to their mission in the society of men). The emphasis on masculinity is not surprising given the predominantly male environment.

Like *Desocupados*, *Manifestación* is reproduced in black and white with great clarity. Little is lost in the translation to print, save some details in the urban background and the nuances of coloring. *Manifestación* (Img. 13) has been studied extensively, including a recent comprehensive digital humanities project by Malba.³¹ The men in the foreground of the painting in particular have received the scholarly attention they warrant as sympathetic, actualized figures.³² However, there are at least two women in the crowd, those most visible in the right half of the foreground. The geometric center of the burlap canvas is the



Image 13. Antonio Berni, *Manifestación* (Demonstration), 1934. Museo de Arte Latinoamericano de Buenos Aires.

torso of a child, seemingly seated on the shoulder of the woman to its left. As the central focal point, the fair-skinned child simultaneously underscores the desperate economic conditions of the protestors, even for children, and indicates hope for the better future the unemployed protestors are fighting for. Given Berni's efforts to depict a diverse cross-section of the workforce, this white child is a conservative choice for this focus, belying the revolutionary rhetoric that the AIAPE upheld as a model for visual artists.

In 1941, five years after Berni's first appearance in *Unidad*, his 1936-37 work *Medianoche en el mundo* (Midnight in the World) graced the cover of *Nueva gaceta* (Img. 14). Unlike the first two examples, this work illustrated a news item rather than a text about Berni and his work. The text here, written by the president of the AIAPE's Buenos Aires chapter, Emilio Troise, described Nazi aggression in the USSR during World War II.³³ The article set up a dialectic between the people of the United States, who largely opposed the war, and Wall

28. Asunción Lavrin, *Women, Feminism, and Social Change in Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay, 1890-1940* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995).



Image 14. Antonio Berni, *Medianoche en el mundo*, 1937, published in *Nueva gaceta* n.º 5, July 1941, 1. Centro de Documentación e Investigación de la Cultura de Izquierdas en Argentina, Buenos Aires.

29. Córdova Iturburu, "Hacia una plástica revolucionaria," 13.

30. [Cipriano Vitureira?], "El mensaje de A. Berni," *AIAPE. Por la defensa de la cultura* 2, n°. 19-20, September-October 1938, 7.

31. Malba, "Antonio Berni - *Manifestación*," accessed July 26, 2022, <https://malba.org.ar/manifestacion/>.

32. See Anreus, "Adapting to Argentinean Reality;" Jacqueline Barnitz, *Twentieth-Century Art of Latin America* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2001), 84; Sandra Benito Vélez, *Territorios de diálogo. España, México, Argentina, 1930-1945: entre los realismos y lo surreal* (Mexico City: Museo Nacional de Arte, 2006).

33. Emilio Troise, "La nueva guerra," *Nueva gaceta. Revista de la Agrupación de Intelectuales, Artistas, Periodistas y Escritores* 1, n°. 5, July 1941, 1.

34. Anreus, "Adapting to Argentinean Reality," 109.

Street interests who benefited from it. Troise argues that the masses were largely pacifist, and that businesses that benefited from the wartime economic boom (due to arms production and related industries) lobbied for the government to enter the conflict.

The Berni work *Medianoche en el mundo* that illustrated Troise's text was painted in response to the Spanish Civil War, like Forner's works discussed above, in a departure from works like *Desocupados* and *Manifestación*, which foregrounded domestic labor issues. Anreus describes *Medianoche en el mundo* as an unusual allegorical work, in which a group of women and girls of all ages gather in a lamentation scene around a fallen man.³⁴

In its transfer from canvas to print, some details of *Medianoche en el mundo* are lost compared to those of *Desocupados* and *Manifestación*. Repeated mourning scenes receding into the background, a strategy not dissimilar to that found in Forner's *España* series, are nearly illegible in *Nueva gaceta*, directing the reader's attention to the foreground scene of mourners. Within the group are four sets of women or girls holding children, if we read the central figure as a mother—Mary—mourning her son, Jesus. This gesture underscores the severities of the violence of war and its impact on future generations. Particularly, the young girl on the right holding a baby evokes a sense of extreme tragedy, implying that their mother is lost or otherwise absent, and highlighting the young girl's future role as matriarch. The AIAPE likely chose this image for its portrayal of the brutality of war, although its incidental messaging on motherhood falls in line with imagery repeated throughout the pages of its magazines.

CONCLUSION

The concentration of maternal imagery, focus on women's suffering, and emphasis on children in the AIAPE's three magazines created a vision of the Río de la Plata region to be preserved from fascism and dictatorship. Through examples of work by Raquel Forner, María Rosa de Ferrari, and Antonio Berni, we can begin to understand how artists helped to build a gendered visual identity for Rioplatense antifascism. While each artist responded to specific events, whether domestic social issues or the Spanish Civil War, their work was repurposed through the lens of the AIAPE's editors and writers. As a whole, these works coalesced into the depiction of a relatively uniform identity in relation to the AIAPE's defensive political rhetoric. Viewing *Unidad*, *AIAPE*, and *Nueva gaceta* through the lens of feminism illustrates how the social normativity of the magazines' imagery belies their purportedly radical politics. By placing mothers and the next generation at the center, Forner, Ferrari, Berni, and their editors

emphasized futurity, communicating the value of passing traditional, democratic values on to future citizens.



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