

The Craft of Memory
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Amelia Peláez: The Craft of Modernity is conceived as a glimpse through the window that this pioneering artist's unique production provides onto an exceptionally dynamic context. Sometimes referred to as "Heyday Havana," the Cuban capital during the 1930s–50s is a subject so laden with romantic associations, its scenography so rich, its social backdrop so rife with constructed memory and loaded with implications regarding the tumultuous events that followed, that its study involves the parsing out of myths and ideology in almost equal measure to the excavation of hard facts. It stands to reason that such heated topics are especially well served by methodologies that focus not on dramatic events and the deeds of tyrants or great men, but on the tangible and mundane. Beyond the strong visual impact of the unapologetically appealing work of Amelia Peláez del Casal (b. 1896, Yaguajay, Cuba; d. 1968, Havana), one finds an unrelenting fixation on quotidian objects that makes her production highly conducive to the exploration of the material culture (the sum of the everyday objects and the cultural meanings they reveal) that animated her world. If Walter Benjamin was correct in saying that "the tiniest authentic fragment of everyday life says more than a painting," then Peláez's work communicates on two levels at once.ⁱ

The exhibition's point of departure is a simple observation: despite the very strong associations that Peláez's oeuvre bears with the arched stained-glass windows (*mediopuntos*), Corinthian columns, and curlicue ironworks that constitute a major part of her subject matter after the 1940s, it would be a mistake to circumscribe her interests to architectural decoration. She lavished equal attention on arguably less spectacular objects, such as furniture, textiles (particularly tablecloths), and tableware. Peláez's interest in ornamental architecture was part of a broader affinity with craftwork, which she herself confirmed in a statement that appears elsewhere in this catalogue but bears repeating: "The artist, as I see it, is nothing more than a hardworking artisan who has purified and refined his or her trade."ⁱⁱⁱ

It is surprising that Peláez's focus on craft has not played a larger role in prior interpretations of her work. One of the few direct (if brief) discussions of the topic appears in a text from 1990 by the Cuban art historian Alejandro G. Alonso. The pertinent section begins with a comparison between Peláez's work and that of Ferdinand Léger, the founder of the Parisian Académie Moderne, where Peláez studied between 1931 and 1934. Citing a quotation by Guillaume Apollinaire, Alonso describes the French artist as someone who truly engaged the times in which he lived, by virtue of his proclivity to depict machine production and factory labor; Peláez's intention, he asserts, is altogether different:

[In her work] we find not an admiration for the products of industry. . .but antithetically the magnification of artisanal products, which become a constant presence; not a taste for what is produced today, but an admiration for what preceding generations, the forgers of our nationality, left behind for us: the *vitrales* [stained-glass windows], the columns, the lacework of the iron grilles, of the tablecloths, all made grand, all placed in contact with the organic luxury of tropical fruits and flowers that are often transposed into the handmade works of the artisan.ⁱⁱⁱ

Alonso goes on to speculate that, while Peláez's interest in craft may seem to harken nostalgically back to the past, it is tied rather to her efforts to define a timeless mode of national expression. This expression, he asserts, revolves around a vision of Cuban national identity (*cubanidad*) that is totally atemporal and ahistorical, dislodged from any "definitive spatio-temporal components that would serve to clarify this concept."^{iv}

While it is true that Peláez rendered objects and ornament in an abstracted, formally unspecific manner, with respect to her emphasis on artisanship, quite the opposite of ahistoricity is at work. The artist's engagement with craft bears thick relations to her time and place. It is no accident that her experimentation coincides with an era of great modernization and urban change in Cuba, along with the cresting development of craft's "evil stepbrothers," mechanical production and mass consumerism. Only by interrogating these contextual factors can we begin to understand how craft objects function as signifiers in her production.

One of the first questions that arises is whether Peláez's perspective on craft—and her artistic vision in general—can be said to be nostalgic. The literature on Peláez is shot through with claims of anachronism. It is often taken for granted that, despite her adoption of a then-cutting edge formalistic painting style, her work bears an implicit pining for the colonial *criollo* universe that defined the preceding century.^v Yet it can be argued that Peláez's true subject was not the past but rather a very current condition, a form of contemporaneity that was itself defined by a heightened sense of fluidity between past and present, tradition and modernity.^{vi} It is essentially impossible, decades later, to access such nebulous conceptions deeply enough to provide a definitive answer to this question. Nevertheless, to approach the temporal implications of craft in Peláez's work, it is helpful to explore some of the ways that the past/present duality manifested in the world around her.

Nowhere was the sense of temporal conflation more apparent than in the urban landscape of Havana itself. The city that Peláez returned to from Paris in 1934 (at age 38) had experienced two accelerated cycles of growth and modernization, which had played out roughly across the time span of her own life. The first wave resulted from

massive investments by the United States following the end of Cuba's War of Independence against Spain in 1898. The second followed a tremendous increase in national wealth due to soaring sugar prices abetted by the depression of the European beet sugar industry during World War I. Together these influxes of capital triggered the transformation of Havana's urban plan, infrastructure, and demographics. The city's rocky water's edge was reinvented as the emblematic Malecón that we know today, and the Paseo del Prado was rearticulated as the principal symbolic axis. The Old World capital was suddenly outfitted with a highly advanced lighting and electrical grid; state-of-the-art telephone lines; modern plumbing, sewage, and drainage systems; sleek city streets and highways; and an extensive electric trolley system (fig. 1).^{vii} The last of these factors, in particular, caused the suburbs to grow in spectacular fashion.

The new era inscribed itself dramatically on Havana's skyline. The sugar boom—referred to interchangeably as the *vacas gordas* (fat cows) period or the *danza de los millones* (the dance of the millions)—resulted in an extended construction wave that produced major landmarks such as the Capitolio Nacional (modeled after the United States Capitol building at the behest of then-President Gerardo Machado), the Palacio Presidencial, and the Colina Universitaria, in addition to many banks, office buildings, hotels, retail stores, and private homes. With the benefit of new building methods, particularly the use of steel-girded structures, these additions often bore an outsize scale that loomed large amid the urban fabric, dwarfing adjacent colonial buildings (fig. 2).

For the most part, these new Republican constructions can be stylistically categorized as Beaux-Arts, a revivalist aesthetic associated with eclecticism because of the way it merged neoclassical forms with Imperial Roman immensity and generous amounts of Baroque- and Renaissance-inspired ornamentation. Havana took this multifariousness to another level. Cuban builders of the period were typically indiscriminate in incorporating features as disparate as Moorish arches and French Gothic spires, in addition to freely invented elements and features derived in a manner so vague as to render their antecedents unrecognizable.^{viii}

The simultaneous introduction of Franco-Belgian, Viennese, and Catalan versions of Art Nouveau architecture compounded the motley impression created by the hyper-eclecticism of Cuban Beaux-Arts.^{ix} Beginning in the late 1930s (the same period during which colonial elements became Peláez's main focus), Havana's amalgamation of styles was layered further with the emergence of Miami Beach-inspired Art Deco as well as International Style architecture, with its pared-down angularity, interpenetration of inside and outside, and novel features like curtain walls and open-plan interiors; even Prairie School and Scandinavian architectural modernisms made appearances. All the while, the colonial style sounded a *basso continuo* (to borrow the vivid phrase used by

Cuban architectural historian Eduardo Luis Rodríguez): though increasingly neglected, subsumed, and literally overshadowed, it remained a constant visual presence.

The salient point is not that the urban makeup of Peláez's Havana displayed a wild syncopation of architectonic styles, but that each manifestation bore its own temporal association. Historical colonial articulations, some more than 400 years old, blended with recent, *historicist* variations of Beaux-Arts, which aimed to create a sense of timelessness. They shared the stage with multiple strands of the proto-modernist Art Nouveau movement and with various offshoots of contemporary "high" modernism, which served to signal the dawning of a new age. At the level of popular sentiment, this state of temporal confusion seems to have been absorbed into daily existence with relatively little turbulence, perhaps by virtue of the intense and widespread enthusiasm for the new—a measure of awe before modernity that compromised the ability to perceive an urban disunity that was so rapidly emerging; or it was accepted as a completely natural concession, a tolerable by-product of progress.

This sense of comfort with the abrupt coexistence of the modern and the traditional may appear amorphous and autochthonous, but it was girded underneath by concrete economic interests. One need look no further than the tourist ephemera of the era: in travel guides, postcards, hotel brochures, souvenirs, and advertisements for airlines and travel agencies, Heyday Havana is represented as an alluring destination precisely because of the opportunity it presented to take a virtual step back in time without sacrificing the comforts and luxuries of the modern era (fig. 3).^x Indigenous examples of the theme of old and new were just as ubiquitous, particularly in the abundance of visual material produced to stimulate domestic consumption. Even a cursory scan of the advertisements appearing in the major popular magazines, such as *Carteles* and *Social*, yields a generous sampling of veiled Spanish/*criolla* maidens—sensuous yet respectable symbols of the colonial past—juxtaposed with fashionably dressed, modern women sporting bobbed haircuts. In this context, the coexistence of tradition and modernity may have served the purpose of hedging bets, capitalizing on the fervor for the new while mitigating the threatening dimensions of change.

The economic stakes involved in encouraging both foreign and domestic habits of consumption created powerful incentives that led city officials to undertake initiatives to preserve some of the vestiges of Cuba's colonial past. Notably, they were often joined in these efforts by prominent members of the Havana intelligentsia, even if the latter sector may have been propelled by divergent motivations.^{xi} Architect Joaquín A. Weiss provides perhaps the clearest example in his 1936 publication *Arquitectura Colonial Cubana*, which embodies contemporaneous inclinations to valorize the colonial.

Weiss's book is filled with yearning for the relative tranquility and unity of the colonial past. It is important to note, however, that the book would have shared a crowded field with specialized magazines such as *Arquitectura* and *Espacio*. While the covers of

these publications often feature an image of a colonial edifice, the contents tend to celebrate the work of modernists such as Oscar Niemeyer, Richard Neutra, Frank Lloyd Wright, and Le Corbusier. Weiss himself often contributed to these publications, and, despite the nostalgic tone of *Arquitectura Colonial Cubana*, his actual architectural production was very much oriented toward the present; in fact, he is responsible for one of the most important Art Deco buildings in the city, the 1937 Biblioteca de La Universidad de La Habana in the neighborhood of El Vedado.

These apparent contradictions were not at all unusual among Havana's cultural producers. The same duality can be seen in the legacy of José María Chacón y Calvo, the government's director of culture between the critical years of 1934 and 1944.

Chacón played an important role in some of the era's most significant colonial restoration projects. At the same time, he was an avid supporter of the artistic, literary, and architectural avant-garde. Indeed, he helped bring the two dimensions together numerous times by providing colonial buildings for the staging of exhibitions of vanguard art (in which Peláez often participated), including the 1938 *Segunda Exposición Nacional de Pintura y Escultura* (*Second National Exhibition of Painting and Sculpture*), held at the Castillo de la Real Fuerza, one of Cuba's grandest and oldest colonial edifices, on the recently restored Plaza de Armas.^{xii}

Peláez's connections to Chacón and his efforts to marry the colonial revival with the activities of the artistic vanguard are clear enough given the fact that he wrote the essay for her 1935 solo exhibition at the Lyceum Women's Club.^{xiii} Yet an even more proximate tie can be made to Lydia Cabrera, the distinguished ethnographer and cultural theorist who was among Peláez's closest friends. In 1927, the two left together for Paris, where they shared an apartment and studied under the Russian painter and designer Alexandra Exter; their friendship continued until the end of Peláez's life, well after Cabrera's relocation to Miami in 1960 (fig. 4). Cabrera was a pivotal figure for the Cuban *vanguardia* generation, exemplifying in her writings their efforts on canvas to generate a new sense of national identity appropriate for the modern age. By the same token, together with her partner María Teresa ("Titina") de Rojas, she led the charge on various colonial restoration projects. This impetus is most clearly discerned in the couple's efforts to preserve their own home in Havana's Marianao neighborhood, known as the Quinta San José.^{xiv}

In a manner that is strikingly reminiscent of Peláez's compositional isolation of decorative elements, Cabrera and Rojas created extensive and meticulous photographic records of the often-dilapidated furnishings and architectural decoration of dozens of colonial homes throughout Havana, Trinidad, and other cities (figs. 5a–5f). There is a clinical stillness to these images, which number in the hundreds. While this

quality is surely a function of the taxonomic imperatives of preservation work, it is difficult to ignore the air of stasis, of frozen time, which seems to hang over the neglected objects and ornamentation they record; it is as if these objects have become mute for having lingered too long in the present. The images could not be further removed, in this sense, from Peláez's work, in which the articles of the past seem so vivid and so brashly intertwined with the here and now.

Whether looking at Cuba's modernist avant-garde or at the culture at large, we find a context in which the coexistence of past and present was profoundly naturalized. It is certainly productive to view this condition in terms of the underlying frictions that it may have masked. As Ingrid W. Elliott demonstrates in her essay in this catalogue (p. X), the manner in which Peláez introduced artisanal elements associated with Cuba's colonial past prompts a reading premised on the notion that she sought to transpose certain bygone societal values into the present while also expressing deep ambivalence about the negative dimensions of yesteryear. At the same time, it is no contradiction to also view Peláez's emphasis on crafted objects—and more precisely, her grafting of those objects onto one of the clearest embodiments of contemporaneity available to her, the modern painting-object—as a gesture toward the same convergence of past and present that was evident all around her, from the streets of Havana to the efforts of her peers among the *vanguardia* to the pages of *Social*. Few other subjects, in fact, would have offered a richer opportunity to explore the theme of temporal confusion—for the notion of time cuts straight to the heart of craft's contradictory nature.

Despite an enormous mass of cultural baggage that would suggest the contrary, craft is not at all a holdover from the pre-industrial past, but rather an entirely modern invention. As the theorist Glenn Adamson has compellingly argued in his book *The Invention of Craft* (2013), the associations of artisanship with the past were born simultaneously with the concept of craft itself, at the dawn of the industrial revolution. Given this theme's centrality to the present argument, it is worth quoting from this text at length:

[Craft] emerged as a coherent idea, a defined terrain, only as industry's opposite number, or "other." Craft was not a static backdrop against which industry emerged like a figure from the ground. Rather, the two were created alongside one another, each defined against the other through constant juxtaposition.

What had been an undifferentiated world in the making, in which artisans enjoyed relatively high status within a broader continuum of professional trades, was carved into two, with craftspeople usually relegated to a position of inferiority. This bifurcation divided the infinitely complex field of human production into a set of linked binaries: craft/industry, freedom/alienation, tacit/explicit, hand/machine, traditional/progressive.^{xv}

Adamson continues:

[Under modernity, craft] is positioned as fundamentally conservative, both in the positive and negative senses of that word. Progress is always located elsewhere. . . . In the nineteenth century, [craft] was typically consigned either to a merely mechanical role, as the execution of designs, ideas, and imperatives, or given responsibility for static tradition. Artisans and their products, then, were understood in one of two ways: as in need of "improvement," or on the contrary, as fragile connections to the traditional past.^{xvi}

One of the strangest aspects of how artisanship is so often relegated to the dusty shelf of bygone tradition is the degree to which this marginalization requires the dissimulation of craft's persistent centrality within modern industrial production. Before the very recent dawn of digital visualization tools, engineering programs, and 3D printing (which by and large remains prohibitively expensive), artisanal skill played a crucial role at the initial stages of fabrication: It was the artisan who carved the prototype used to conceive and test a given mass-produced object; and it was the artisan who cast a mold from this prototype, the quality of which would determine that of the thousands or millions of units subsequently produced.^{xvii}

Most areas of industrial manufacture still require handwork at the later phases of production. This is as true of laptop computers as it is of lace, one of Peláez's favorite subjects, and of the wicker furniture that features so prominently in her large self-portrait of 1946 (*Autorretrato* [*Self-Portrait*], [plate X](#)). Indeed the Heywood-Wakefield pieces that still populate the Peláez family home—including the spectacular Victorian rocker that was apparently the artist's favorite—provide as clear a representation as any object of the fruitful marriage of craftsmanship and industry ([figs. 7, 8](#)). The same can also be said of the "lacework" of iron grilles, so important to Peláez's imagery, which start off as industrially produced rods before they are bent into glorious form by the artisan's hands and hammer. Peláez would surely have witnessed this transformation with her own eyes at the iron workshop of the Salesian School of Arts and Crafts—the same place where she often fired her ceramics, just a short distance from her home in the neighborhood of La Víbora ([fig. 9](#)).

It is arguable whether this detail is enough to substantiate the claim that Peláez was especially mindful of craft's perennial contiguity with industrial production. She would not have been alone, however. This belief is essentially synonymous with the thesis of Anita Arroyo's 1943 publication *Las artes industriales en Cuba*, the most definitive textual source available regarding whatever attitudes about craft that may have been latent amid Peláez's milieu. Arroyo begins her study by repeating the (inaccurate) narrative of craft's near disappearance, but then reassures us that in Cuba artisanal traditions were currently alive and well, indeed thriving. Notably, Arroyo credits this resurgence in part to the late-blossoming compatibility of artisanship with "new concepts" in art, by which

she presumably means modernism. In a manner that may shed light on Peláez's own mentality, Arroyo reinforces the idea of craft's retrograde nature while simultaneously establishing its true place in the here and now.

If indeed Peláez saw craft as a living thing compatible with the modern world, it stands to reason that its appearance in her work should signify the present, in addition to, if not necessarily instead of, the receding past. This formulation is, as I have tried to show, fully consistent with the generalized state of temporal confusion that distinguished the context in which she labored. And yet, to stop there would risk ignoring some of the deepest ways in which her work entails a link between craft and memory. Let us return to the quotation in which Peláez expresses her affinities with the artisan so unequivocally, this time in a fuller iteration and emphasizing the clearly stated importance of duration, constancy, and daily practice to her description of craft and art as parallel activities:

The artist, as I see it, is nothing more than a hardworking craftsman who has purified and refined his or her trade, which requires daily, constant labor, an effort that must unfold on a daily basis throughout life, from the beginning to the end, without needing to renounce all that is fundamental in the lives of those who are not artists. What this also means is that the artist never ceases to be an artisan—who can say when one has reached a high enough degree of purification and refinement of one's trade?^{xviii}

In Peláez's construction, it is *time*—an entire human life's worth—that binds the artist and the artisan together.

Time is also bound to a certain trait that is shared by lace, wicker furniture, and iron grilles: each consists of dense webs of individual strands of material and each is therefore time-consuming to represent in a drawing or oil painting. It has often been taken for granted that Peláez gravitated toward these objects for the sake of their formal ("plastic") potential, for the visual, aesthetic effects that they generate when transposed into a two-dimensional, painterly composition. While undoubtedly true, this interpretation is vague, and it brushes past the important implications that these choices of subject matter bring to bear on Peláez's position regarding the artistic process itself. When a painter makes the decision to depict a lace tablecloth, she signs herself up for the painstaking task of attending to each individual detail, each loop, each line, each variation in size and density. In essence, she becomes a lace maker herself, rehearsing in real time the same meditative, cognitive operation that another human in history enacted in order to create the object that sits before her. Thus, while the slowness of craft seems to place it in inherent opposition to the rapid pace of modern life, craft's reliance on daily practice ostensibly holds the potential of bridging the past and the present.

In Benjamin's essay "The Storyteller: Reflections on the Works of Nikolai Leskov" (1936), he argues that the figure of the weaver working on a loom represents a kind of ideal model regarding the capture of fleeting experience and its congealment into stories (and into cultural memory):

The more self-forgetful the listener is, the more deeply what he listens to is impressed upon his memory. When the rhythm of work has seized him, he listens to the tales in such a way that the gift of retelling them comes to him all by itself. This, then, is the nature of the web in which the gift of storytelling is cradled.^{xix}

For Benjamin, the cognitive experience of immanence that rhythmic handwork affords constitutes the perfect means for the transcription of the past into memory. It is perhaps not altogether coincidental that he employs the image of the web as a metaphor for this conversion: it is difficult not to think of Peláez's webs, those visible in her paintings as well as the figurative, temporal web into which she was willingly drawn each time she rendered a lace tablecloth or elaborate iron grille.

The implied actor in Benjamin's analysis, and as always his true subject, is the industrial revolution. If the processing of memory is, for Benjamin, not just a mental operation but one that is tied to the body, specifically the hand, then the new forms of labor brought on by industrialization threaten our ability to "grasp" our own past. In her essay, "Walter Benjamin: Traces of Craft" (1998), Esther Leslie summarizes Benjamin's understanding of the effects of mechanization on the human perception of time:

Technology dictates a syncopated, dislocating rhythm to which workers and soldiers must permanently react. The division of labour compels a mechanical measure of labour time, the voided, homogeneous time of manufacture. The work process, especially the factory drill, de-skills operators. Industrial work processes are an "automatic operation," wherein each act is an exact repetition of the last.^{xx}

The idea of repetition is closely tied to both craft and mechanical production, but with radically different implications for each. Craft objects result from repetitive movements, such as the insertion and re-insertion of a needle, the continuous sanding of a wood surface, the gentle spinning of a clay pot, or the oscillation of a shuttle at a loom.^{xxi} What's more, artisanship relies on the mnemonic aspect of repetition for its very survival as a field of endeavor. In likening craftwork to oral tradition, Benjamin reminds us that the continuity of a given artisanal activity depends on its being faithfully rehearsed by successive generations, and thus preserved through a kind of cultural-somatic memory. Within the context of industrial production, however, repetition has the opposite effect, producing (per Benjamin) something akin to amnesia at the level of both the individual and the culture in general. In adapting to the movements of the machine that he is operating, the industrial worker's repetitive gestures are not his own; they occur independently of his own volition. At the same time, the machine engenders a kind of repetition that is overly exact—inhumanly so. Time and memory are thus obliterated.

This question of the exactness of repetition is key, for while craft relies on the repetition of deeply internalized patterns and forms, it relies as well on the accumulated effect of both intentional and inadvertent deviations from them. These variations provide indexical proof that someone else was once in the living presence of this crafted thing. In a way, they transfer that human presence from the past into the present. Accordingly, they "enliven a handmade product; their absence deadens a mass-produced one."^{xxii}

One would be hard-pressed to find a better exemplification of this (admittedly subjective) effect than Peláez's resolutely imperfect representations or "repetitions" of lace, wicker, and ironworks. In painting after painting, it is as if she reveled in the asymmetries, miscounts, and errant proportions that arise when filigree is painted loosely by hand. Returning to Alonso's comparison of Peláez to Léger, one could add the self-evident observation that it is not just the representation of industrial versus artisanal subjects that differentiate their work, but also the precision of Léger's line.

The aesthetic effect in question emerges on a different register when one sees that at a certain point in the late 1930s, Peláez begins to repeat a particular compositional scheme—roughly describable as an ovoid central element flanked by two vertical shapes—again and again; nevertheless, every picture is different from the next. Note, for example, how the shutters in the background of *Naturaleza muerta en rojo* (*Still Life in Red*, 1938, plate X) echo the columns in *Naturaleza muerta con peces* (*Still Life with Fishes*, 1958, plate X), despite the 20 years that separate these paintings. To survey Peláez's production over the course of such a time span is to experience and re-experience the same fugue-like effect engendered by the variation of deeply internalized patterns or forms, only in this case with the force of decades of labor behind it, as a function of an oeuvre conceived in *longue durée*, and as a function of memory.

Before the industrial revolution, such variations would generally have been considered nothing other than a sign of poor artisanal quality. In fact, throughout the Victorian age, advocates of the factory system often cited the supposed inconsistency of artisanship in their arguments. In response, opponents of mechanization began to prize irregularity as a mark of human affect, creativity, and individuality.^{xxiii} The idea that one may locate aesthetic, even spiritual value in the "flaws" that accompany human handwork arose directly out of the rhetoric of the political conflicts of the late 19th century. This idea is, in other words, thoroughly and profoundly modern.

We arrive once more at the paradox of craft's modernity. We could have arrived here by any number of routes, yet the paths we traversed are significant because they are some that Peláez herself may well have followed. The intention has not been to argue that one should ignore craft's anachronistic associations when considering the artisanal

objects so central to Peláez's imagery. It has been to underscore that these associations are unstable and layered with contradiction. To the same extent that craft stands as a signifier of the past, it is emblematic of the sensation of temporal schism, of a mythic rupture in the fabric of time, which is essentially synonymous with modernity. At the same time, its daily practice can just as easily embody the resolution of this schism, the healing of this rupture. It is perhaps in this sense that it resonates most deeply with Amelia Peláez's project.

Unless otherwise noted, translations of original Spanish texts are by the author.

ⁱ Walter Benjamin, "The Author as Producer," in *Reflections: Essays, Aphorisms, Autobiographical Writings*, ed. Peter Demetz (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1978), 229.

ⁱⁱ Amelia Peláez, interview by José Seoane Gallo, 1963–67, published in José Seoane Gallo, *Palmas Reales en el Sena* (Havana: Editorial Letras Cubanas, 1987), 161.

ⁱⁱⁱ Alejandro G. Alonso, *Pintores cubanos: Amelia Peláez* (Havana: Letras Cubanas, 1988), 8.

^{iv} *Ibid.*

^v In this context, the word *criollo* refers to Cuban-born descendents of Spanish colonials.

^{vi} See Juan A. Martínez, "Lo blanco-criollo as lo Cubano: The Symbolization of a Cuban National Identity in Modernist Painting of the 1940s," in *Cuba, The Elusive Nation: Interpretations of Identity*, eds. Damian J. Fernández and Madeline Cámara (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2000), 277–91.; and Ramón Vázquez Díaz, *La escuela de La Habana: Entre tradición y la modernidad* (Havana: Museo Nacional de bellas Artes, 2004), 9–18.

^{vii} Louis A. Pérez, *On Becoming Cuban: Identity, Nationality, and Culture* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina, 2008), 116–25.

^{viii} Rachel Carley, *Cuba: 400 Years of Architectural Heritage* (New York: Watson-Guptill, 2000), 26.

^{ix} Eduardo Luis Rodríguez, *The Havana Guide: Modern Architecture, 1925–1965* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2000), xiii.

^x It is worth mentioning that the foreigner's trope of Havana as a city "trapped in time" has persisted, for very different reasons, well beyond the revolution of 1959. See Raúl Rubio, "Discourses of/on Nostalgia: Cuban America's Real and Fictional Geographies," *Letras Hispanas: Revista de Literatura y Cultura* 3, no. 1 (Spring 2006), http://www.modlang.txstate.edu/letrashispanas/previousvolumes/vol3-1/contentParagraph/0/content_files/file0/Rubio.pdf.

^{xi} See Ingrid W. Elliott, "Domestic Arts: Amelia Peláez & the Cuban Vanguard (1935–1945)" (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 2010), 176–203.

^{xii} *Ibid.*, 210–11.

^{xiii} *Ibid.*, 336.

^{xiv} We can perceive a glimmer of the temporal paradoxes that the Quinta San José embodied in a quotation by José Lezama Lima, a pivotal figure within Cuban modernist literary circles: "To have a house is to have a style capable of combating time. Combating time can only be achieved if an essential sense of tradition is fused with creativity that continues to grow and has not stopped. Lydia Cabrera and María Teresa de Rojas have made such a house." Quoted in Rafael Rojas, "The Illegible City: Havana after the Messiah," in *Havana Beyond the Ruins: Cultural Mappings after 1989*, eds. Anke Birkenmaier and Esther Whitfield (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011), 126.

^{xv} Glenn Adamson, *The Invention of Craft* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), xiii.

^{xvi} *Ibid.*, xvii.

^{xvii} *Ibid.*, 145–47.

^{xviii} Seoane Gallo, *Palmas Reales en el Sena*, 161

^{xix} Walter Benjamin, "The Storyteller: Reflections on the Works of Nikolai Leskov" (1936), reprinted in *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Ward, 2007), 83–110.

^{xx} Esther Leslie, "Walter Benjamin: Traces of Craft," in *Journal of Design History* 11, no. 1 (1998): 7.

^{xxi} Adamson, *The Invention of Craft*, 186.

^{xxii} *Ibid.*, 143.

^{xxiii} Ibid., 195.