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Celia Calderón: Mexican Graphic Work, Activism, and Memory in the Drawing and Print Collection of the Former Academy of San Carlos

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ABSTRACT

Collective memory is formed from codes that include or exclude social subjects. Although the history of women in art emerged in the 1970s, the rescue and appreciation of Mexican female artists is a work still in progress. Celia Calderón (1921-1969) was an engraver and one of the first female teachers in front of a printing workshop at the Escuela Nacional de Artes Plásticas (ENAP, in Spanish) at the Academia de San Carlos in Mexico City´s Downtown.

Calderón combined social activism and creativity as a member of the *Taller de Gráfica Popular* (Popular Graphic-Work Workshop). This ESSAY explores her life, work, and teachings. In particular, it analyzes three pieces from the collection at the Academia de San Carlos, in which her fight for women's rights and contributions to national graphic art can be seen.

KEYWORDS

engraving, activism, memory, visual arts, women's history, academy

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INTRODUCTION

Theoretical Framework

The central figure of this ESSAY is Celia Calderón (1921–1969), Mexican engraver and painter who experienced the complexities of a post-revolutionary[1] Mexico while striving to establish herself as an artist, both within the traditional legitimate spheres of art (museums, galleries, biennials, academies) and social movements led by workers and farmers. As often happens with the stories of women artists, information and comments regarding her personal life and tragic suicide are put at the forefront of the research about her, which often overshadow her professional contributions.

This paper aims to analyze Calderón's career both as an artist and professor, emphasizing her role as a teacher at the then Escuela Nacional de Artes Plásticas (National School of Visual Arts [ENAP, in Spanish], now Facultad de Artes y Diseño [Faculty of Arts and Design, FAD, in Spanish] at the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, UNAM). She paved the way for future generations of women in academia. In particular, we will focus on three of her works in the *Acervo de Dibujo y Estampa* (Drawing and Print Collection, ADyE, in Spanish) of the former Academy of San Carlos.

To explore Celia Calderón's artistic production, I will primarily draw on historiographic analytical tools, especially those rooted in Women's History. Since the 1970s, feminist theory and historiography have developed approaches to the historicity of women. This gave rise to seminal works such as *A Historia de las mujeres en Occidente* (*History of Women in the West*) by Georges Duby and Michelle Perrot (2000), and Linda Nochlin's revolutionary essay ¿Por *qué no han existido grandes artistas mujeres?* (*Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?*), 2007 (considered the foundational text in feminist art historiography).

Since then, numerous theoretical and historiographic approaches have emerged to produce more inclusive analyses, emphasizing the role of marginalized groups in history and challenging Eurocentrism in academic studies. While I acknowledge the importance of this literature production and I incorporate feminist perspectives where relevant, this essay cannot center on contemporary feminisms without falling into an anachronistic reading of its subject: a

[1] Post-revolutionary Mexico is understood as the historical period from 1917 to 1967, in which the country was rebuilt after a revolutionary process that "involved the foundation of a new political regime that created the bases for the configuration of a modern and democratic State" (Editorial translation from Aguilar & Serrano, 2012, p. 7).

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twentieth-century Mexican female artist whose political affiliation was communist —an ideology that often viewed feminism as a "*petit bourgeois*" phenomenon. As Andrea Giunta states:

> Classifying the work of all women artists as feminist not only erases the historical depth of those who pursued feminist art—developing work linked to activism or specific aesthetic strategy—but also disregards the positions they identified with, which are key to shaping a debate and a historically situated set of issues (Giunta, 2019, p. 78).[2]

Therefore, while this essay adopts a feminist perspective, its primary objective is to highlight Calderón's contributions in her professional field as an engraver and professor, and how her art became a weapon against fascism, poverty, and violence.[3]

WOMEN AT THE ACADEMY OF SAN CARLOS

Before introducing the figure of Celia Calderón, it is necessary to provide a brief overview of the presence and participation of women at the Academy of San Carlos, located in the Historic Center (Downtown) of Mexico City. This context reveals the long-standing struggle of women to access artistic education, as well as their efforts to integrate into professional and academic life. The institution was founded in 1783 by order and under the patronage of King Charles III of Spain, as part of the famous Enlightenment-driven "Bourbon reforms". Its purpose was to provide formal artistic education to the youth of New Spain, in line with the philosophical principles of the Enlightenment and neoclassical aesthetics. It was the first art school and museum established on the American continent (Báez, 2009).

Although there are some early accounts of women's presence at San Carlos—as we will see later—their involvement was limited in what was considered a "public space" that was not designed to accommodate female students or professors, either physically or academically. This aligns with Bejarano's assertion:

> Men carry out the most socially valued activities; they belong to the space of recognition, visibility, and competition. In contrast,

[2] Editorial translation. All quotes are translations from the original texts in Spanish.
[3] The reviewers of this essay focused their observations on the application of feminist theories and history. This position seeks to address these concerns and clarify that the primary focus of my work is the artist and her work.

> activities carried out in the private space—those associated with women—are the least valued socially; they go unseen, and are not publicly appreciated (Bejarano, 2011, p. 61).

The first documented case of a woman at the San Carlos Academy dates to the 18th century: María Guadalupe Moncada y Berrio. She was named Honorary and Meritorious Academic and honorary director of the painting department. As her title suggests, this was purely honorary; i.e, there is no evidence that she participated in the academic life or decision-making of the institution. In other words, she neither studied nor worked at the school. Only three of her paintings are known, of which only two are signed (Velázquez, 2023), indicating her limited public presence and the lack of a system to recognize or make her work visible.

According to Angélica Velázquez, women's participation during the 19th century can be divided into two stages. The first began in 1848, when women's works began to be exhibited at the annual shows in the galleries of what was then the Escuela Nacional de Bellas Artes. However, they participated as "amateurs, since their artistic production remained within the domestic sphere and was not part of the art market" (Velázquez, 2018, p. 14). The second stage began in 1888, when the first women were officially admitted as students, marking the professionalization of their artistic training. Nonetheless, they did not have the same access as their male peers: they were forbidden from attending male-nude classes and were limited to landscape and ornamental art practices.

The panorama shifted in the 20th century. There was a growing female student population and—at least on paper—no restrictions on their academic training. However, in practice, the halls of San Carlos and the broader professional art world remained full of sexism and obstacles. As Bejarano notes, "women who, for various reasons, enter the workforce face a discriminatory and segregated labor market" (Bejarano, 2011, p. 61). Time and again, examples of this can be found, such as commission sabotage targeting women artists, sarcastic critiques of their work, or documentation showing that they were denied the opportunity to join the school's faculty (Fuentes, 2022). It is still striking that the first woman to lead a workshop at the Academy was Lola Álvarez Bravo, until 1945 (Fuentes, 2022, p. 128), 162 years after the school's founding.

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STUDENT AND TEACHER

Celia Calderón enrolled in the ENAP affiliated with the UNAM, around 1942. That year, the student body comprised 306 men and only 38 women (Fuentes, 2022, p. 141). She was a Francisco Díaz de León, Ignacio Rosas, Benjamín Coria, and Julio Castellanos student. From the beginning, she stood out:

> ... [...] she participated in her first international exhibition with an oil painting shown at the University of Texas. She obtained a scholarship to continue her studies at the Escuela de Artes del Libro, founded and directed by Díaz de León. By 1946, she had joined her alma mater's faculty and the Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes (INBA). At just 25 years old, she was already teaching engraving, drawing, and painting. She was the second woman accepted into the school's faculty and the first to lead a printmaking workshop (Fuentes, 2022, p. 141).

Thanks to an interview with José de Santiago Silva, in 2024, her former colleague at the Academy of San Carlos, and the compilation of testimonials gathered by Comisarenco (2021, para. 21), we know that, as a professor, she was demanding, committed, and reserved. However, her students also expressed great affection for her, describing her as tender, generous, and methodical in her instruction. In the following section, we will focus on the ways Calderón connected her teaching practice with a prolific body of graphic work, as well as her professional involvement with artist groups and the *Taller de la Gráfica Popular* (Popular Graphic-Work Workshop, TGP).

CONTRIBUTIONS TO GRAPHIC WORK AND SOCIAL ART

When reviewing Calderón's career and body of work, I identify two main facets: the art market and protest. She blended both organically, gaining access to nearly all the art world's legitimizing spaces (museums, galleries, biennials, grants, and others) without straying from her political activism. In *A Room of One's Own*, Virginia Woolf wrote in 1923: "For most of history, Anonymous was a woman" (Woolf, 2017, p. 69, Spanish version). Calderón embraced that saying and was anything but anonymous. In this section, I will focus on her printmaking work and her involvement in artist groups and social causes through art.

Calderón's extensive career reveals a constant drive to create or join artist collectives. In 1946, she and several colleagues

co-founded the Society for the Promotion of the Plastic Arts. She was a founding member of the Mexican Society of Engravers in 1947 and the Salon of Mexican Fine Arts in 1949—spaces that brought together some of the most emblematic artists of the Mexican art scene. According to Fernando Gamboa, the members of the Salon were "the 50 best painters, engravers, and sculptors in Mexico" (Tibol, 1974). It is worth noting that Celia Calderón entered this exclusive group at the age of only 28. Being recognized at that level and sharing exhibition space with established male artists such as Diego Rivera, David Alfaro Siqueiros, and José Clemente Orozco marked a rupture in the pattern of excluding young women artists. Another significant recognition came from a scholarship to the Slade School of Art in London, which propelled her international career and made her one of the first Mexican women artists to receive a specialized grant abroad.

Where I see Calderón's most significant contributions is in her work with the *Taller de la Gráfica Popular* (TGP)[4], which she joined in 1952 (Comisarenco, 2021, para. 13). Calderón's desire to engage in collective work aligned with the workshop's collaborative model, as outlined in its founding statutes (published in 1938):

> This Workshop was founded to stimulate graphic production in defense of the interests of the Mexican people. To that end, it seeks to bring together as many artists as possible around a constant effort of mutual improvement, primarily through collective production.
>
> Any production by Workshop members, whether individual or collective, may be carried out if it does not, in any way, support reactionary forces or fascism (TGP Bylaws, in García & Oles, 2008, p. 22).

The most common techniques used at the TGP included lithography, metal engraving, xylograph, and especially linoleum. Their main formats were: flyers, pamphlets, protest banners, periodicals, and posters. According to Humberto Musacchio, "many engrav-

[4] The creation of the TGP dates to 1933, when David Alfaro Siqueiros proposed the opening of a *Taller-Escuela de Artes Plásticas* (Visual Arts Workshop-School, [TEAP, in Spanish]) within the framework of the *Liga de Escritores y Artistas Revolucionarios* (League of Revolutionary Writers and Artists, [LEAR, in Spanish]). Two years later, a branch for engraving emerged, called the *Taller Editorial de Gráfica Popular* (Popular Graphic Publishing Workshop), which began operations in 1937 (no longer including the editorial element in its name) with Leopoldo Méndez, Pablo O'Higgins, and Luis Arenal, accompanied by Ignacio Aguirre, Francisco Dosamantes, Raúl Anguiano, Jesús Escobedo, Isidoro Ocampo, Everardo Ramírez, José Chávez Morado, Alfredo Zalce, among others.

ings from the workshop show a deliberate attempt to fit, within the limited space of a flyer, the compositional elements typically found in a mural" (Musacchio, 2007, p. 25). These production processes, materials, supports, and themes would be incorporated into Calderón's works, as we will see in the pieces held in the *Acervo de Dibujo y Estampa* (Drawing and Print Collection, [ADyE, in Spanish]).

In terms of content, the TGP members supported labor and farmer causes. Most of them were affiliated with the Mexican Communist Party. In its early years, the group maintained a close relationship with post-revolutionary governments—particularly with that of President Lázaro Cárdenas—for whom they produced propaganda. However, that alliance weakened during Manuel Ávila Camacho's presidency (1940–1946) and completely dissolved under Miguel Alemán Valdés's presidency (1946–1952).

Calderón joined the TGP in 1952, a time of great international recognition for the workshop but also with internal crises and stagnation regarding themes and representation (Musacchio, 2007, p. 50). Tensions reportedly began after the group was awarded the International Peace Prize, which was officially given to "Leopoldo Méndez and collaborators"—a move that upset many members because it disregarded the collective nature of the workshop and gave all credit to Méndez. Another source of conflict was a city ordinance, passed as an initiative of Mexico City's regent Ernesto P. Uruchurtu, that banned all forms of public propaganda that could be showcased on the city's walls. This severely limited the group's ability to distribute its work. Until then, according to Juan de la Cabada, the TGP's posters "would appear pasted all over the city and were often removed from the walls by anonymous hands who later hung them in proletarian homes" (Musacchio, 2007, p. 25).

Despite these internal conflicts, the collective principles and ethos of the workshop attracted the young female engraver, who stated in 1958:

> What drew my attention and made me join [the TGP] was its purpose: to connect art with people's everyday lives. Moreover, an artist should not work in isolation; I did it, and I realized it was a mistake. For me, the presence of prominent figures in the TGP was not decisive, although I recognize that I learned a lot from their work (Tibol, 1957, p. 13).

Calderón's participation in several TGP projects has been documented in publications and exhibition catalogs. One highlight is the collective portfolio *Grabados del Taller de la Gráfica Popular* (En-

gravings from the Popular Graphic-Work Workshop, 1956). In addition to featuring selected prints by each member—including one by Calderón—Andrea Gómez, a fellow member, immortalized an image of a TGP assembly in which Calderón is depicted speaking. Perhaps Gómez aimed to capture the workshop's organizational dynamic, marked by horizontal structures and consensus-based decision-making.

Although internal conflicts due to ego crisis and political disagreements were common, the TGP enjoyed a golden era internationally, receiving invitations to exhibit in Europe, South America, and countries beyond the so-called Iron Curtain. Thanks to this, Calderón traveled to the People's Republic of China in 1957, where, as Aguilar (2021) notes:

> ... [...] she visited the studios of the most prominent artists of the time and collaborated on several projects. Celia was captivated by the vivid colors characteristic of Chinese engraving and painting, which would influence her prints and paintings. During her stay in China, she exhibited her work at the Beijing Artists' Center (Aguilar, 2021, p. 32).

From this period comes her print *Niñas chinas* (1958), which clearly reflects the aesthetic of Maoist cultural revolution art. According to José de Santiago Silva—who was familiar with her work at the San Carlos workshop—Calderón brought a special press from China capable of applying localized color using multiple plates (De Santiago, personal communication, 2024).

Furthermore, during a roundtable organized by Raquel Tibol to commemorate the TGP's twentieth anniversary, a debate between Leopoldo Méndez and Calderón took place. In it, Calderón cited the Chinese printmaking system as a model for achieving high-quality color editions on a large scale:

> In China, some printmakers criticize having someone else do our prints, arguing that the printer's hand alters the quality. Is laziness the reason we outsource printing? We must acknowledge that the same hand gives a certain uniformity to our works.
>
> [...]
>
> There are reproduction houses in China, but many printmakers produce their own editions; thus, they have improved their methods. I saw an artist make around 200 color prints in two days using 15 plates (Tibol, 1957, p. 9).

This testimony illustrates the lasting impact of experience on her artistic and teaching practices. Unlike other professors who touched only superficially on various printmaking techniques, Calderón focused on mastering one, thereby enabling technical refinement. She contributed to Mexican printmaking by introducing the Chinese method of color printmaking (De Santiago, personal communication, 2024).

By 1963, political and economic differences had intensified among TGP members. Adolfo Quinteros was replaced by the first (and only) all-women leadership committee, headed by Celia Calderón, with Elizabeth Catlett as general secretary and Mercedes Quevedo as treasurer. Musacchio explains:

> The committee, supported by Elena Huerta, reinvigorated the organization: they caught up on overdue rent, and the TGP store was well-stocked and lively. Just like in the old days, posters were again produced for social organizations, most notably the *Unión Nacional de Mujeres Mexicanas* (National Union of Mexican Women, UNMM), to which several mentioned women belonged.
>
> However, political tensions persisted, and the workshop had all but abandoned collective work and peer critique. The organization was again in crisis, as confirmed by the women's committee's resignation (Musacchio, 2007, p. 38).

Calderón ultimately left the workshop in 1965. According to Abad and Pérez:

> This was because Luis Arenal, then the TGP's general coordinator, organized a breakfast honoring former president López Mateos, "to thank him for the benefits he brought to the organization during his term" and to request support. According to critics, this initiative was carried out without consulting the group's assembly and represented a loss of financial independence. This decision marked the beginning of the TGP's gradual but inevitable decline as a collective art organization and deepened the group's internal division (Abad & Pérez, 2018, annex 8).

In the following years, the TGP shifted its focus to sales and archive auctions. In 1973, part of its materials was donated to the Academy of Arts. However, according to Abad and Pérez (2018), until 2010, its archive was still under the custody of the TGP Civil

Association, with no public inventory or access. Despite this inaccessibility, both the TGP collection and Calderón's graphic work are preserved in other repositories, including the Museo Nacional de la Estampa (MUNAE), the Museo de Arte Moderno (MAM), the Museo Blaisten, and *the* Acervo de Dibujo y Estampa (ADyE) of the former Academy of San Carlos.

In the following section, I will analyze how Calderón's involvement in the TGP is reflected in three selected works from the ADyE collection.

CELIA CALDERÓN, MEMORY AND COLLECTION AT THE ACADEMY OF SAN CARLOS

The ideas surrounding social movements and the aesthetic principles shared by the ADyE can be appreciated in three works by Celia Calderón, held in the collections of the former Academy of San Carlos: *No queremos vivir así*, *Retrato de niña*, and *Tehuanas* —all undated.[5] Although there is no official information on how these pieces were incorporated into the collection, it can be inferred that the artist donated them to her *alma mater*, as this was a common practice among professors and students. What follows is an analysis of how Calderón's presence in this institutional archive contributes to a process of inclusion in the memory of that university community.

Di Liscia poses the following:

> How is a women's culture constituted within patriarchy? A traditional space where meanings have been shaped within relationships of subordination, where it has been difficult to develop one's own terms. [...] Culture is created, recreated, stored, and preserved through particular codes, learned and repeatedly taught in socialization. Memory studies articulate the individual and the social, as they refer to what society has inscribed in the past within a person: how and what it has taught them, how it has conditioned or enabled them to remember, and how it gives meaning to the present based on lived experience.
>
> Socialization implies processes of inclusion and exclusion (of signifiers, symbols, spaces, projections, and projects) within more or less explicit power relations. Thus, memory is the result of specific and particular possibilities of being and remem-

[5] For this section, the *Acervo de Dibujo y Estampa* (Drawing and Print Collection, ADyE) of the former Academy of San Carlos, in the *Facultad de Artes y Diseño* (Faculty of Arts and Design), and the *Archivo Fotográfico Manuel Toussaint del Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas* (Manuel Toussaint Photographic Archive of the Institute of Aesthetic Research), both at UNAM, were consulted.

> bering—it is built and builds itself through self-recognition and valuation. This is particularly relevant when studying women's memories (Di Liscia, 2007).

As mentioned in the introduction to this ESSAY, studies on women's history—specifically on the history of women in art— have contributed to recognizing women as creators and not solely as "muses" or models. This shift has also led museums worldwide to organize temporary exhibitions or include works by women artists in their permanent collections. Some examples of this include the Museo del Prado in Spain and the recent renovation of the Rijksmuseum in the Netherlands. These institutions seek to "create, recreate, and store" memories related to women who produce and promote art and culture. Still, it should be noted that such efforts remain insufficient, as evidenced by statistics cited by Giunta (2019, pp. 35–65).

In the realm of archives, there are initiatives to "depatriarchalize the archive," which aim to create documentary collections focusing on women and gender dissidents. Theoretically, this analysis draws on selected principles from the document *Manifiesta para despatriarcalizar el archivo* (*Manifesta*[6] *to Depatriarchalize the Archive*, 2020)—written in the framework of the *Cátedra Internacional Inés Amor* (Inés Amor International Lecture), promoted by UNAM—as well as the collective values and practices of the TGP to approach Calderón's works held in the ADYE. In point 5 of the *Manifesta*, we read:

> Let us name those who have been stripped of their names. Let us search for the constellation of names beneath the name that is spoken, where the individual, the author, and the hierarchy dissolve. (To decenter, to dim the dominant figure). Let us also name those other kinds of labor that seem anonymous —those of care, of those who place their bodies and vital energy to ensure things happen, to sustain the creative act and life itself.

The process of forming a collection reflects valuation and the shaping of "constellations of names". Including Calderón's works in a university collection makes her artistic and pedagogical work visible and significant both within and beyond the institution. Moreover, her pieces challenge hierarchies, dim the "dominant figure," and highlight "those seemingly anonymous labors".

[6] Translator's note: In Spanish, the name of the "Manifesto" is written in feminine instead of the traditional neutral masculine. Thus, I decided to keep the "a" in the English translation given the topic of the document itself.

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In the linocut *No queremos vivir así* (undated) (Figure 1), a soldier depicts two young people as subdued. The composition is original in terms of its perspective: only the oppressor's boot and the butt of his rifle—planted firmly on the ground—are visible, while the oppressed are the focal point, crouched and gazing downward. At the TGP, Calderón was able to combine her critical perspective with her technical mastery. Here, the protagonists are not the soldiers, but those who are being silenced.



FIGURE 1. Celia Calderón. *No queremos vivir así* (undated). Linocut: 65 x 49.5 cm. FAD-UNAM Collection (Photograph: Andrés Martínez Ortiz, 2023; courtesy: FAD-UNAM).

Likewise, in the print collection of San Carlos, there are examples of the lithographs *Retrato de niña* (undated) (Figure 2) and *Tehuanas* (undated) (Figure 3). In the first, an indigenous girl with braids and a rebozo is depicted, with the focus on her face, spotted with bluish tones that contrast with her brown skin and large black eyes. In the second work, a group of three Tehuanas women are captured in the midst of their daily activities; their figures stand out against a white background without context. One remains seated while the other two hold and arrange wicker baskets.

In both images, we see Calderón's interest in representing indigenous women in their daily lives; this contrasts with the production of other TGP artists, whose prints depict major events such as strikes, rallies, or anti-fascist propaganda. Calderón, however, approaches intimacy—those "who put their bodies" into care, motherhood, and identities. The absence of a landscape or background—placing the drama on isolated figures—was a point of debate within the workshop, as recorded in the 20th anniversary roundtable of the TGP, moderated by Raquel Tibol. María Luisa Martín, another engraver from the same workshop, defended this type of composition:



FIGURE 2. Celia Calderón. *Retrato de niña* (undated). Lithograph: 57.5 x 44.5 cm. FAD-UNAM Collection (Photograph: Andrés Martínez Ortiz, 2023; courtesy: FAD-UNAM).



FIGURE 3. Celia Calderón. *Tehuanas* (undated). Lithograph: 66 x 50 cm. FAD-UNAM Collection (Photograph: Andrés Martínez Ortiz, 2023; courtesy: FAD-UNAM).

> ... [...] I do not believe that to express the popular, secondary landscape details must be included. [...] There is Andrea Gómez's *Niña de la basura*; she has nothing around her, but the figure itself is very expressive and portrays a girl with the mentality of a woman, a girl without childhood who has to work to live, with the sadness of being an adult, with an adult mentality; there the portrait did not need the landscape. [...] I think we must avoid sectarian attitudes; sometimes you can say everything with a head or a figure of a worker without having to put the factory behind it. What matters is not to invent that worker, but to have seen and studied him (Tibol, 1957, p. 12).

In Calderón's words, within the TGP they not only identified with the problems of these sectors "but we learned to see them in order to represent them" (Tibol, 1957, p. 11); that is, direct contact with communities was essential to sketch and empathize with their struggles. One of the means for such coexistence were the women-only school practices organized by Calderón with San Carlos students; De Santiago (personal communication, 2024) particularly recalls one in which they went to indigenous towns in Oaxaca to take notes and paint. It is worth mentioning that these were funded by the Secretaría de Marina (Secretariat of the Navy, [SEMAR, in Spanish]).

Within Calderón, we can identify initiative, inspiration, and commitment to women's and children's causes. There is evidence of this in her work, where she explores the representation of the body, daily life, and female identities. As in the ADyE prints, we see several pieces whose protagonists are girls. The title of one of her paintings recalls the attention; it is exhibited at the Galería Arte Moderno (Gallery of Modern Art, 1950): *Se emborrachó y me pegó* (undated). It is done in mixed technique. There is no photographic record of it in the exhibition brochure (its current whereabouts or condition are unknown). Still, it reflects her interest in addressing issues of violence and the socioeconomic condition of women.

We know that Calderón extended her social commitment beyond the classroom and her production. She was part of the *Unión Nacional de Mujeres Mexicanas* (National Union of Mexican Women, [UNMM, in Spanish]), an organization derived from the Mexican Communist Party (PCM, in Spanish), whose goal, according to Lau Jaiven, was to fight to *really* resolve women's problems. She adds that "they were useful for organizing demonstrations and getting women from the delegations to attend sit-ins and protests" (Lau Jaiven, 2014, p. 179). Delia Selene de Dios (member of the UNMM in the 20th century) shared her testimony with Lau Jaiven:

> We achieved a large audience because women from the Taller de la Gráfica Popular (Popular Graphic-Work Workshop, TGP), such as Elvira Gazcón, Adela Gómez, and later Fanny Rabel, great women artists, fueled the Union, so we could call on the rest of the people. We worked with female farmers and working women from urban areas. We did many things (Lau Jaiven, 2014, p. 178).

In 1968, the UNMM aligned itself with the student movement, which grouped demands from different social sectors but particularly impacted public universities. San Carlos was one of the centers for producing propaganda, which involved both students and professors (De Santiago, personal communication, 2024).

Female members of the union actively participated in demonstrations and distributed the students' petition through flyers. Their participation is documented in the protest of Monday, September 30 (which went from the *Monumento a la Madre* to the Cámara de Diputados in Mexico City), attended by "five thousand women, many of them mothers (workers, clerks, farmers, intellectuals, teachers, professionals, artists, housewives)" (Oikión, 2018, p. 75) to denounce police brutality and demand the release of imprisoned students.

We have no record of Celia Calderón's participation in the movement; however, she may have been present through the UNMM. In any case, the tragic outcome of the October 2 massacre was a hard blow to the entire university community, with comrades and teachers killed, persecuted, or imprisoned. Her works in her last year of life (1969) are dark and enigmatic. In the *Archivo Fotográfico Manuel Toussaint del Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas* (Manuel Toussaint Photographic Archive of the Institute of Aesthetic Research) of UNAM, there are records of drawings of gloomy and arid landscapes, and expressionless female faces. This occurred amid a scenario that foreshadowed the Dirty War in Mexico and the decline of communism in the Soviet Union. Amid this pessimism, Calderón decided to commit suicide in a room of the Academy of San Carlos.

Although limited to three prints, her presence in the ADYE collection of the former Academy of San Carlos is significant. Besides demonstrating technical mastery in linoleum and lithographic printmaking, they reveal the inspirations and concerns that accompany Celia Calderón's art: the life and place of women and the search for a dignified life for all.

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CONCLUSIONS

Celia Calderón was a Mexican artist and printmaker who studied and thrived within an institutional environment that has historically excluded women. She stood out as both a student and professor through her work's high quality and dedication to her students. Calderón was, above all, a social activist. She found in the graphic work the means to spread her ideals and defend marginalized and minority groups. In her work and actions—as an artist, teacher, comrade in struggle, and friend—we see a talented, intellectual, and supportive woman.

In addition to the permanent mark she left on her colleagues and students, this artist left a testimony of her artistic practice in three graphic works held in the *Acervo de Dibujo y Estampa* (ADyE) of her alma mater. Her presence in the print collection encourages the continued development of research on women artists both within and beyond institutions.

In light of what I presented in this ESSAY, I pose the question: How should we remember Celia Calderón? A woman who, despite entering all the significant spaces of artistic legitimation—museums, biennials, galleries, art schools—always remained loyal to collective work as a member of the *Taller de la Gráfica Popular* (TGP). The possible answer might lie in her two greatest passions: as a comrade in the struggles of marginalized groups and as an engraver deeply committed to her production and teaching.

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