

# Alexander Gray Associates

Coco Fusco

CONFIDENCIAL, Autores Firmantes, 2015

## MEMORANDUM

INSTITUTO DEL LIBRO  
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A: Co. René Roca DGICL-2852 FECHA 21 de mayo de 1971  
Director Grupo III CONFIDENCIAL "AÑO DE LOS 10 MILLONES"  
ASUNTO: DE: Oficina Dirección General.

Te instruyo para que des las órdenes pertinentes para retirar con -  
caracter urgente del comercio internacional, así como de las listas  
y catálogos de nuestro organismo las siguientes obras y autores, en  
las próximas horas agregaremos nuevos nombres y títulos, así como -  
tomaremos las decisiones con respecto a la circulación nacional.

JUAN PAUL SARTRE

Sarte visita a Cuba  
Tintorero, el secuestrado de Venecia  
Las Palabras  
¿Qué es la literatura? Tomos I y II  
Cuestiones del método

MARIO VARGAS LLOSA

Los cachorros

JULIO CORTÁZAR

Rayuela  
Cuentos  
Sobre Julio Cortázar  
(Cuadernos Casa)

JORGE SEMPRUN

El largo viaje

CARLOS FRANQUI

El libro de los 12

CARLOS PUENTES

Aura

ITALO CALVINO

Las dos mitades del vizconde

MARGARITA DURAS

Días enteros en las ramas

LUIS GOYTISOLO

La isla

GABRIEL GARCIA MARQUEZ

Cien años de soledad  
Gabriel García Márquez (valoración múltiple, Casa)

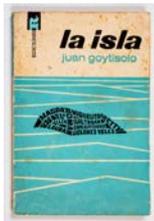
## Coco Fusco

### CONFIDENCIAL, AUTORES FIRMANTES, 2015

Coco Fusco's research on Cuba led to her collaboration with Lilian Guerra (professor, University of Florida), which resulted in the mixed-media installation *Confidencial, Autores Firmantes* (2015). Through this work, Fusco further explores the Padilla affair by presenting twenty-one facsimiles of official memorandums and letters from 1971; found by Guerra in the archives of the Cuban Ministry of Culture. The documents detail orders and methods by which to censor publications by intellectuals deemed "anti-Cuban" due their open disagreement with the government's detainment of the poet Heberto Padilla, and their skepticism regarding the motives of Padilla's ensuing "confession" that he had betrayed the revolution. The documents are presented alongside original Cuban editions of books by authors such as Gabriel García Marquez, Julio Cortázar, and Mario Vargas Llosa who signed two open letters to Fidel Castro that were published in *Le Monde* in 1971 in protest of the Cuban government's treatment of Padilla. This room-size installation is an archive of a key historical moment that redefined the Cuban Revolutionary government's relationship with progressive intellectuals of that era out and inside the island, and cast a long shadow over its relationship with its literary cadre. *Autores Firmantes* mirrors a moment in time both past and present, in the artist's words, "A state may produce the absence of its own archive while retaining its own contents for a future exercise of force."



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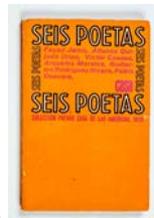
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8.

1. Fuentes, Norberto. *Condenados De Condado*: Norberto Fuentes. La Habana: Casa De Las Américas, 1968. Print.

2. Leon, Eduardo Heras. *Los Pasos En La Hierba*. La Habana: Union, 1990. Print.

3. Goytisola, Juan. *La Isla*. La Habana: Ediciones R, 1962. Print.

4. Parra, Nicanor. *Poemas*. La

Habana: Casa De Las Américas, 1969. Print.

5. Enzensberger, Hans Magnus. *Las Casas y Trujillo*. La Habana: Casas De Las Américas, 1969. Print.

6. Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Sartre Visita a Cuba: Ideología Y Revolución. Una Entrevista Con Los Escritores Cubanos. Huracán Sobre El Azúcar*. Habana: Ediciones R, 1960. Print.

7. Gorz, Andre. *Límites Y Potencialidades Del Movimiento De Mayo Cuadernos De Polemica*. La Habana: Editorial De Ciencias Sociales Instituto Del Libro, 1969. Print.

8. F. Jamis, A. Quijada Urias, V. Casaus, A. Morales, G. Rodríguez Rivera, P. Guevara. *Seis Poetas*. La Habana: Casa De Las Américas, 1971. Print.

## Interview

**Coco Fusco:** Artists have many reasons to be interested in documents and have many ways to work with them. Some create fictitious documents to elaborate on the relationship between representation and history or the relation between visuality and truth. Others hone in on the deadpan and fact-laden formal quality of documents to embrace an approach to art making that eschews embellishment or decoration. And some artists are principally interested in documents as a means of making historical information that has been ignored or suppressed visible, as was noted by art historian Hal Foster in his essay, *An Archival Impulse*.

Your work as a historian is deeply involved with documents of many kinds, from government records to personal ephemera to films and literature. Can you talk about how your approach to working with documents differs from that of an artist? And how does your approach change in relation to the nature of the documents that you deal with?

**Lillian Guerra:** One story—regardless of its source—is never representative of the multiple dimensions of any lived reality. As a historian who has spent a lot of time listening to old and young Cubans as well as folks like myself who were born elsewhere (i.e. “eternally aspiring Cubans”), I have often best understood a period, political culture, or simply a point of view through humor. Humor is perhaps one of the best examples of how human expressions of an individual experience or a shared, collective interpretation of a reality can be disseminated, conserved but also—within just a generation or a period of time—lost. Keeping lists of jokes, taking oral histories on everything that might occur to the interview subject regardless of my own agenda puts archival documents and other primary sources such as the press and movies or plays into conversation with each other. More importantly, that conversational process includes us, the historian/interpreter observers: it makes us part of the past and the past a part of us. That is what I consider essential to the crafting of historical texts. I also consider the gathering, deciphering and reproduction of such “documents” critical to the creation of art, whatever its form and whatever the intention of the artist. When art is meaningful to those to whom it is directed (and Cuban art has traditionally been about explaining “us” Cubans), it speaks to our knowledge, our desire for greater knowledge, and our soul in a language we understand, a sign language to be precise.

**CF:** I consider your book *Visions of Power* to be the most detailed and trenchant account of the political struggles and projects of the first decade of the Cuban Revolution. What was the most challenging aspect in relation to the documentation of that history, which is so contested?

**LG:** Frankly, the greatest challenge was not gathering the sources. It was the absolute and total disbelief on the part of my friends, family and fellow intellectuals that I would actually write about them in the way that I did. I don't consider my interpretations particularly original: in hundreds of conversations since I started going to and living in Cuba in 1996, I learned about the way in which the revolutionary state made citizens complicit in processes that did not benefit them. For example, the elimination of the independent press, a process effectively carried out by militias categorically characterized as “el pueblo uniformado” by the state, just as the army had been. Neither armed force represented the people. They represented the desire on the part of leaders to use force to intimidate, convince, empower citizens and thereby make citizens feel they were responsible for its uses. This process was fueled by the euphoria that accompanied the dream of radical and just change in 1959. Later, it was policed and enforced with the creation of watch-dog groups like the block-by-

block Committees for the Defense of the Revolution. Originally supposed to have been a temporary measure meant to block the United States from backing successful counterrevolution within the island, the CDRs became permanent soon after the triumph of Cuba against the CIA-trained invaders at the Bay of Pigs/Playa Girón in 1961. Membership became a requirement of revolutionary citizenship in 1968. In short, Fidel had prophesied in the early 1960s that one day there would be no need for a state intelligence service that mimicked those of the past because citizens would all be voluntary intelligence agents, willing even to rat on themselves. By the late 1960s through the 1980s, that was true yet complicity, compliance, culpability of the citizenry in its own repression was managed, encouraged, expected by every agency of the state and the saturation of public spaces and discourse by the state. By 1975 when the new Communist Constitution eliminated autonomous civil society and mandated unanimous votes on the part of all representative bodies of the state such as the National Assembly, there were only two ways to be: either an obedient revolutionary committed to “unanimity” or a traitor. The paradox that clearly distinguished obedience and unanimity from the values of any logical idea of revolution was not addressed; it was ignored. Citizens were asked to blind themselves to the limits of their liberation and the prevalence of oppression; they were asked to justify both whenever challenged, especially by a foreigner. I wanted to explain the origins of this paradox and this blindness, define their meaning to the hegemony of the Cuban state and reveal the painful betrayal of the dream that the majority of Cubans had for their country in 1959.

**CF:** Obtaining access to government records in Cuba is not as straightforward a process as it is in many other countries. What restrictions are openly acknowledged? What restrictions only become apparent upon entering the libraries and archives?

**LG:** One must have a research visa approved and supported by a government institution specifically charged with one's disciplinary field. For me, that is history. The best way to do historical research in Cuba is do it as one would in any other country of Latin America—or so my non-Cubanist doctoral advisors believed. That is, to be there for a very long stretch of time, so long that bibliographers, neighbors, fellow historians and the local fruit peddler will come to trust you. Personal archives can be gold mines when they become available as are intimate, oral history interviews that last hours. However these are not only rare but need the bulwark of traditional written sources to they can be fully comprehended. The Cuban revolutionary state produced, for instance, dozens and dozens of magazines that have hardly if ever been used to access the citizens' experience or even how policies of the state were justified and explained. Examples include *Muchachas*, Cuba's equivalent of *Teen Magazine* in the 1980s, *Cuba Internacional* for the “Soviet era” of the 1970s and *Granma Campesina*. This latter publication was a version of *Granma*, the Communist Party organ specifically published for peasants from 1964–1983 during the height of small farmers' resistance to Communist economic controls and the criminalization of an autonomous market). In addition, many officials' speeches were no longer transcribed and published in unedited form in the government daily, *Revolución* (1959–1965) and *Granma* (1965–present). For this reason, magazines aimed and distributed specifically for militants of the Communist Party are extremely important: they said what could not have been said publicly and included many statistical and other survey data never released publicly. There was also no “hiding” or attempt to gloss the government's commitment to surveillance and the use of informants in the official magazines of the CDRs like *Con la Guardia en Alto* and *Vigilancia*. Here the true and honest face of official endorsement of repressive tactics comes through in articles with titles such as “Un Millón de Tapabocas [A Million Mouth-Shutters].” For my work, I mesh as

many of these kinds of sources together with the rare archival variety and the rich, deep memories that many Cubans have of particular moments, speeches, policies, fashions, attitudes. Ultimately, I find those memories are not only accurate but they prove so important to a process or period I am researching that, without even trying, I find references to them in my published or archival sources: the “proof” of their centrality, accuracy and meaning, for a conventionalist. The stakes in Cuba have always been very high for forgetting and most citizens know this, especially those over the age of 35. It was only in 2001 that Cuba’s National Assembly finally passed the first law authorizing the need for the conservation and declassification of government archives since 1959. Before that point, much (possibly most) post-1959 ministries’ documentation went straight to “material prima” [recycling] every five years. If it was valuable to national security, it became what professional librarians call a “dark archive”, hidden from researchers or simply unknown, unprocessed and unused. Cuba is and has been a national security state for far longer than that term has existed in this country. Consequently, if those dark archives were ever to open, one can only imagine the history inside! Every historian I know, both on and off the island, is dreaming of that day; and of being the first in line.

Fields like anthropology were entirely eliminated in Cuba in the late 1960s and 1970s when anthropological researchers whose work was supported by Fidel Castro succeeded far too well in documenting the everyday forms of dissent and dissidence that no Cuban official was willing to acknowledge. In specific terms, one can date the turning point in the state’s view of anthropology and its methods as detrimental to national security to 1971: in that year, a scandal erupted after the Cuban Ministry of the Interior declared Oscar and Ruth Lewis’ Cuba project interviewing average citizens the work of the “CIA”. This was not only a false but utterly absurd claim meant to justify domestic repression of social science methods that might make public all the state needed to deny in its search for and surveillance of the goal of “unanimity” behind its policies among citizens. Critique, particularly informed critique, and access to information about how other Cubans think and feel without state mediation or intervention in the voicing of those opinions have always been the greatest threat to the stability of the Communist Party’s monopoly on power.

For all of these reasons, the political culture and state policies have combined to make researching very difficult. Knowing that an archive exists, that it supposedly renders its contents to researchers, having a research visa and then having a letter of introduction to the archive’s staff does not necessarily make any difference: you may not get to see anything in the end. However, persistence counts as does the human building of trust between researcher and purveyors of archival, library and other such sources. In the end, I am an idealist. Many people may want to deny the past but when injustices have been committed and either impunity or indignity reign, the dead are never truly dead and they are always looking for someone to bring that forgotten past back into life.

**CF:** The Padilla Case has long been an obsession among Latin American intellectuals. I was drawn to the story of the poet’s “confession” because of the mysteries around the documents pertaining to the case. There was a mad attempt by the Cuban government to film, transcribe and photograph Padilla confessing so as to “prove” that he chose to do so. It seems that the state first sought to produce a political drama for a foreign audience but then pulled the production from circulation. What do you think was going on with all that document production?

**LG:** In the late 1960s through the 1970s Fidel Castro and his ministers maintained consistently that in Cuba there was neither a need for official censorship nor secret government censors along the lines of the Batista dictatorship and any other right-

wing dictatorship so common to Latin America before and during the Cold War. Instead, as Castro and others repeatedly said, Cubans “self-censor” because they want to “protect” the Revolution from internal doubts and creeping fissures in citizens’ commitment. According to Raúl Castro, Fidel Castro and the entire pedagogical infrastructure of the Communist state during and after the late 1960s, it would be through such weak points that imperialist propaganda would do the dirty work of undermining the Revolution from within. Starting in 1968 through 1984, doubts in the legitimacy of Communism or the policies of Communist rule expressed themselves through an array of rebellion. These included styles of dress, individual critiques of policy, homosexuality, interest in foreign music, “selfish” material discontent with rationing, resistance to unremunerated “volunteer labor”, and expressions of racial consciousness that defied the state’s claim of having defeated racism. Understood as forms of counterrevolution, these attitudes and behaviors were termed “ideological diversionism” by Raúl Castro in 1968 and persecuted accordingly through purges led by the Communist Youth at academic institutions, neighborhood courts and sanctions that relied primarily on forced labor as a means of “re-education”. One’s political compliance with party dictates, officially approved discourse and volunteer labor demands also determined the distribution of rewards such as advancement at the university, the right to purchase luxury items such as home appliances and promotion at the workplace. For this reason, when Padilla’s arrest hit the world news, the state carried out massive damage control by attempting to refute the accusations of hypocrisy and outrage to which so many leading intellectuals of the world subjected it. Until then, in fact, the majority of those who protested—including Gabriel García Márquez and Susan Sontag—had been “incondicionales del sistema”, willing to justify and gloss over its abuses as “excesses” and “errors” rather than the violations of human rights that they really were. Calling a spade a spade in Cuba then—and, to a certain degree, now—put one in the position that the Cuban state and the United States government both created simultaneously during the Cold War: political bipolarity, either you are with us or against us. If you criticized the Cuban state for violating human rights or for ruling through repressive means rather than claiming its rule as a genuine expression of the will of the Cuban people, you were likely to be accused of being a defender of Latin American dictators, a pawn of U.S. imperialism, an agent of the CIA or simply confused ideologically. Indeed, it is the experience of most Cubanists like myself that few scholars of Latin America in the United States today feel comfortable criticizing the Cuban Revolution and/or Fidel Castro. They remain sacred because without them, it is as if the historical truths about the US-backed terror-driven regimes of Argentina, Chile, Guatemala, El Salvador and others are somehow diminished. I argue that Cuba’s regime was essentially different than these regimes but it was no less guilty of many of the very kinds of crimes and processes of repression that we have traditionally only associated with the military dictatorships supported by the United States.

**CF:** How did you unearth the letters related to the Padilla Case?

**LG:** I found them by accident in the archive of the Ministry of Culture, then housed on the twelfth floor of the Biblioteca Nacional José Martí. How did I get them out of the archive in photographic form? Through the intervention of Saint Jude, of course. The Patron of Impossible Causes.

## An Open Letter to Fidel Castro

*Herberto Padilla, one of Cuba's leading poets, was arrested and imprisoned in Havana on March 20. No details have yet been made public of the charges against him. The following open letter to Fidel Castro from prominent European and Latin American writers was published in Le Monde on April 9.*

The undersigned, supporters of the principles and objectives of the Cuban Revolution, address you in order to express their disquiet as a result of the imprisonment of the poet and writer Herberto Padilla and to ask you to re-examine the situation which this arrest has created.

Since the Cuban government up to the present time has yet to supply any information about this arrest, we fear the re-emergence of a sectarian tendency stronger and more dangerous

than that which you denounced in March, 1962, and to which Major Che Guevara alluded on several occasions when he denounced the suppression of the right of criticism within the ranks of the revolution.

At this moment—when the installation of a socialist government in Chile and the new situation in Peru and Bolivia help make it possible to break the criminal blockade imposed on Cuba by North American imperialism—the use of repressive measures against intellectuals and writers who have exercised the right of criticism within the revolution can only have deeply negative repercussions among the anti-imperialist forces of the entire world, and most especially of Latin America, for which the Cuban Revolution is a symbol and a banner.

In thanking you for the attention you may give to this request, we

reaffirm our solidarity with the principles which guided the struggle in the Sierra Maestra and which the revolutionary government of Cuba has expressed so many times in the words and actions of its Prime Minister, of Major Che Guevara, and of so many other revolutionary leaders.

Simone de Beauvoir	Luis Goytisolo
Italo Calvino	Alain Jouffroy
Jose Maria Castellet	André Pieyre de Mandiargues
Julio Cortázar	Dionys Mascolo
Jean Daniel	Alberto Moravia
Marguerite Duras	Maurice Nadeau
Hans Magnus Enzensberger	Ottavio Paz
Carlos Fuentes	Francisco Rosi
Gabriel Garcia Márquez	Rossana Rossanda
Juan Goytisolo	Claude Roy
	Jean-Paul Sartre
	Jorge Semprun
	Maria Vargas Llosa
	(partial list)

"An Open Letter to Fidel Castro." The New York Review of Books 16, no. 8 (May 6, 1971).

## La lettre des intellectuels à M. Fidel Castro

Au commandant Fidel Castro, premier ministre du gouvernement révolutionnaire de Cuba :

« Nous croyons qu'il est de notre devoir de vous faire part de notre honte et de notre colère.

« Le lamentable texte de la confession qu'a signée Heberto Padilla n'a pu être obtenu que par des moyens qui sont la négation de la loyauté et de la justice révolutionnaire.

« Le contenu de cette confession, avec ses accusations absurdes et ses affirmations délirantes, ainsi que la pénible parodie d'autocritique à laquelle se sont soumis Heberto Padilla et les

camarades Belkis Cuza, Diaz Martínez, Cesar Lopez et Pablo Armando Fernandez, au siège de l'Union nationale des écrivains et artistes cubains, rappellent les moments les plus sordides de l'époque du stalinisme, avec ses jugements prefabriqués et ses chasses aux sorcières.

« Avec la même véhémence que celle qui fut la nôtre pour défendre, dès le premier jour, la révolution cubaine qui nous paraissait exemplaire dans son respect de l'être humain et dans sa lutte pour sa libération, nous vous exhortons à épargner à Cuba l'obscurantisme dogmatique, la xenophobie culturelle et le système répressif qu'imposa le stalinisme dans les pays socialistes et dont des événements similaires à ceux qui sont en train de se passer à Cuba ont été les manifestations flagrantes.

« Le mépris de la dignité humaine qu'implique le fait de forcer un homme à s'accuser d'une façon ridicule des pires trahisons et ténies ne nous alarme pas parce qu'il s'agit d'un écrivain, mais parce que n'importe quel camarade cubain — paysan, ouvrier, technicien ou intellectuel — peut

être également la victime de semblables violences et humiliations.

« Nous voudrions que la révolution cubaine revienne à ce qui, à un moment, nous la fit considérer comme un modèle au sein du socialisme.

Ce texte est signé par Mines et MM. Claribel Alegria, Simone de Beauvoir, Fernando Benítez, Jacques-Laurent Bost, Italo Calvino, José-Maria Castellet, Fernando Clau-din, Tamara Deutscher, Roger Dosse, Marguerite Duras, Giulio Einaudi, Hans-Magnus Enzensberger, Francisco-Fernandez Santos, Darwiz Fakholl, Jean-Michel Possey, Carlos Franqui, Carlos Fuentes, Angel Gonzalez, Adriano Gonzalez Leon, André Gore, José-Agustín Goytisolo, Juan Goytisolo, Luis Goytisolo, Rodolfo Hinestroza, Mervin Jones, Monti Johnstone, Monique Lanck, Michel Leiris, Lucio Magri, Jorge Mansour, Dacla Marini, Juan Marsé, Dionys Mascolo, Plinio Mendoza, Iltvan Messaris, Ray Millbran, Carlos Monsivais, Marco-Antonio Montes de Oca, Alberto Moravia, Maurice Nadeau, José-Emilio Pacheco, Pier-Paolo Pasolini, Ricardo Porro, Jean Prouteau, Paul Rebevolles, Alain Rossanda, José Revueltas, Rossana Rossanda, Vicente Rojo, Claude Roy, Juan Rulfo, Nathalie Sarraute, Jean-Paul Sartre, Jorge Semprun, Jean Schuster, Susan Sonntag, Lorenzo Tornabuoni, José-Miguel Ullán, José-Angel Valiente, Mario Vargas Llosa.

Le Monde (Paris, France). "La lettre des intellectuelles à M. Fidel Castro." May 22, 1971.

Coco Fusco  
January 9 – February 6, 2016

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Cover: Coco Fusco, *C O N F I D E N C I A L, A U T O R E S F I R M A N T E S*, 2015, detail  
Letterpress and ink on aged paper, 13h x 8.5w in (33.02h x 21.59w cm)  
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