

WHERE ARE THEY? I CAN'T FIND THEM...

Mixed media (pencil, ink, acrylic, and watercolor) on Stonehenge paper, 38" x 50"

It is said that the Greek philosopher Diogenes of Sinope (4th century B.C.) wandered through the streets of Athens carrying a lamp, trying to find an honest man. In this work he is portrayed squatting in the opening of an earthenware tub, in which he was reputed to sleep at night in the marketplace in Athens. In Rome, this sort of container, called a *fiscus*, was used to keep money in, and the word soon became used also for the treasure of the Roman emperors—hence, centuries later, the English word “fiscal,” or financial, in reference to money matters.

Using the anecdote of Diogenes and his lamp as a reference, I portray the grave crisis of leadership in Puerto Rico, incorporating into the portrait of the Greek philosopher seven of the most emblematic, and nefarious, figures holding public power today, including those who, for lack of moral courage, make their peace with the circumstances of the moment.

The figures representative of the moral void in Puerto Rico are, from left to right:

- Police chief José Figueroa Sancha, who is crouching down in the lower left corner, dressed in a SWAT team uniform, carrying an assault rifle and with a tear-gas canister beside him. His analogous equivalent, a gorilla, is sitting in the lower right corner, holding a bloody nightstick.
- Standing over him is Governor Luis Fortuño, blindfolded with an American flag as a symbol of his radical-assimilationist blindness. On his lapel is the insignia of the U.S. Republican Party, object of his greatest interest and affection.
- Beside Fortuño stands Thomas Rivera Schatz, president of the Senate, whose attribute is a Nazi-inspired armband on his right sleeve, a symbol of his political radicalism and his far-right-wing arrogance.
- Beside Rivera Schatz we see Fortuño’s chief of staff Marcos Rodríguez Pujadas, holding a Persian cat and pointing to the gorilla in the lower left corner, urging him to attack the students and the “enemies of the administration.”
- Next we see former president of the University of Puerto Rico system José Ramón de la Torre, dressed in his academic regalia but wearing, in the place of the presidential medallion, the insignia of the New Progressive Party.

These figures are accompanied by the pusillanimous and, thus, collaborators-through-omission:

- First, the Chief Justice of the Puerto Rican Supreme Court, Federico Hernández Denton, shown with his index finger over his lips, indicating his submissiveness to the control of the judicial system by political parties.
- At the extreme right, the president of the Popular Democratic Party, Héctor Ferrer, with a blindfold like Fortuño’s, though with the insignia of Ferrer’s own party plus “ELA,” the initials of the “Estado Libre Asociado,” or “Commonwealth,” which is the political status his party espouses, and below that, the word “colonial,” indicative of the island’s real status.

Note that at the two sides of the group stand the presidents of the island’s two major political parties—parties which, through blindness or arthritic “stiffening of the political joints,” serve only to deepen the current crisis.

Diogenes is accompanied by a dog. This philosopher and others who called themselves “Cynics” praised the virtues of dogs in contrast to the vanity, arrogance, and hypocrisy of humans. In Greek, “kinikos” means “dog-like,” and it is from that word that our modern word “cynic” is derived.

At the bottom of the work the allegory of Diogenes is reprised with the inscription “Where are they? I can’t find them,” which is also the title of this work. That is, where are the honest leaders and men of good will who might be able to save the country?

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