

REFRAMING THE DOVE, THE RIFLE, AND THE FACES: DÉBORA ARANGO'S
GIFT TO ÁLVARO URIBE

JUAN CAMILO BRIGARD

Juan.brigard@gcsc.uni-giessen.de

Juan Camilo Brigard is a doctoral candidate at the Graduate Centre for the Study of Culture at Justus Liebig University Giessen, Germany. His research focuses on the intersection of Colombian and postcolonial literature, textual criticism, performance, and the politics of aesthetics. His dissertation examines how autobiographies of political figures shape narratives of nonviolence.

KEYWORDS

Débora Arango, Álvaro Uribe Vélez, frames, Pathosformel

PUBLICATION DATE

Issue 18, May 31, 2025

HOW TO CITE

Juan Camilo Brigard. "Reframing the Dove, the Rifle, and the Faces: Débora Arango's Gift to Álvaro Uribe." *On_Culture: The Open Journal for the Study of Culture* 18 (2025). <<https://doi.org/10.22029/oc.2025.1473>>.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.22029/oc.2025.1473>



Reframing the Dove, the Rifle, and the Faces: Débora Arango's Gift to Álvaro Uribe

Abstract

Débora Arango is considered by critics to be an outstanding artist, both in her use of painting as political denunciation, and for being a woman who used her art to challenge gender roles and the conservative values of her time. However, before her death and during the office of Álvaro Uribe Vélez (2002–2010), Arango gifted the president a drawing he commissioned, which he made a symbol of his government by inserting a text between the sketch and its frame. From the vantage point of the image's public archive, how should this be interpreted as part of Uribe's political iconography? This *Article* aesthetically and politically reframes the ex-president's partial bracketing of the artist's work by means of his discourse, by outlining a broader picture that considers first a contextualization of Uribe's discursive appropriation of only half of the drawing for his propagandistic ends—currently the dominant discourse on it; and second, presents the artist's political oeuvre as an interpretative repertoire, mapping the image's critical potential by activating its affectively charged visual tropes or *Pathosformel*.

In a rare passage of his memoirs dedicated to an artwork, the ex-president of Colombia Álvaro Uribe Vélez (2002–2010) describes a sketch by Débora Arango. Uribe, a divisive figure both during and after his two terms as president, was popularly elected as a hard-liner at a time when the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) were at the height of their power, and the Colombian state was at its weakest. His administration prioritized security and implemented neoliberal reforms in alignment with the U.S.-backed anti-narcotics and counter-insurgency initiative, under the banner of 'democratic security.' By the end of his presidency, his government had succeeded in weakening the FARC, leading to a shift in the balance of power, such that Colombia became, in the eyes of the U.S. and the European Union, a relatively functional neoliberal state. However, alongside these 'achievements' (subject to the reader's political convictions), his governments were marred by controversies, such as a constitutional amendment allowing his re-election, links between the government and paramilitary groups, as well as widespread human rights violations. The most controversial of these was the so-called 'False Positives' scandal, where the military extrajudicially executed impoverished teenagers to inflate guerrilla body counts; at the time of revising this *Article*, Uribe was charged in connection to this incident with witness tampering and fraud.

In his memoirs, Uribe describes how he received a "painting"¹ from the 96-year-old painter Débora Arango in 2003, two years before her death, when he decorated the artist

the Cruz de Boyacá, Colombia's highest civilian honor conferred by the state. Uribe reports that during his governorship of Antioquia (1995–1997), the artist “had sent” him “paintings and sketches of doves,” and recalls having told her that “nobody would believe they were actually intended for me.”² In exchange, he made Arango a request that “made her a bit uneasy:” he asked the artist for “a painting of a rifle” rather than sketches of doves.³ Arango sent a sketch, which he exhibited in his office at the Casa de Nariño, inserting a note of his authorship between the sketch and its frame, which reassessed the drawing as a symbol of his government having “a monopoly on life and death.”⁴ This was ironic given Arango's critical reputation as “the forerunner of feminist art in the continent”⁵ and a pioneer in the use of painting as a means to critique hegemonic values.⁶ How, then, from the vantage point of its public archive, can one interpret this framing of Arango's drawing as part of Uribe's political iconography? Has the artist been domesticated by the ex-president's arrogation? Is this Arango the same painter renowned for her “combative feminism”⁷ and her critique of the ruling classes?

In this *Article*, I examine Arango's drawing by framing it from two contrasting perspectives: first, I consider Uribe's bracketing of the artwork as a symbol of his political administrations; second, I offer an alternative interpretation by constellating recurring “emotionally charged visual trope[s]”⁸ or *Pathosformel* of Arango's oeuvre. The emotionally charged tropes of Arango's work have circulated in the public sphere through reproductions in books and articles; by focusing on the portion of the drawing amputated by Uribe's reading, I situate the sketch within a broader context that includes both art criticism and other visual works from the artist. This analysis suggests that Arango's drawing is not an endorsement of the former president's “democratic security” but, rather, her last “visual indictment.”⁹ I will employ the term ‘constellation of *Pathosformel*’ to describe a method that merges insights from Aby Warburg's concept of emotionally charged visual gestures and Walter Benjamin's work on history. For Benjamin, a “constellation” in a historical sense is a montage of discourses and images that form a coherent yet contingent pattern, nurtured by “the now-time [Jetztzeit].”¹⁰ My original contribution constellates images from Arango's visual repertoire and traces convergences of its critical ethos, while showing how it enables a discourse that diverges from and opens alternatives to Uribe's propagandistic appropriation.

1_Frame I: A President Asks for a Drawing of an Assault Rifle instead of a Dove

Uribe himself has been the main commentator on the untitled drawing he requested from Débora Arango. But before revisiting Uribe's texts, let us ask: How did Arango become one of Uribe's "dearest friends,"¹¹ such that he could make such a request? Using hints from the public archive, I can only offer partial answers to this question and posit, first, the influence of the shared origin of the ex-president and the artist from different generations of affluent and traditional Medellín families; and second, consideration of Uribe's 2003 decoration of Arango with the Cruz de Boyacá as the pivotal event for his request to Arango.¹² The political framing of one of her works will be analyzed in light of Ilvar Josué Carantón's concept of "co-opting," whereby since 1994 Arango's art has been appropriated by powerful actors (though it had also been co-opted previously¹³), in stark contrast to the decades of censorship she endured prior to her canonization as a national artistic icon.¹⁴ Uribe's framing of Arango's drawing must be considered in this context.

Before writing about Arango's drawing in his memoirs (2012), the ex-president referenced it more crudely, shortly after decorating Arango (2003). Here, Uribe describes forcefully giving the artist an order: "If people see me with doves, they won't believe in me. For me, send an assault rifle."¹⁵ Uribe reinforced its iconographical meaning by rewriting verses from a 1960s supplication for liberation theology by the *nadaísta* poet Gonzalo Arango into a prayer for the ex-president's war against left-wing guerrilla-fighters: "Lord, give us wealth in conscience, give us also clean hands to reap the harvest and bless the universe. Make us invincible with the power of love. And to defend all this freedom, peace and justice, give us courage, a rifle and good marksmanship."¹⁶ The rifle, he suggests, is the weapon that will defend his government. He extends this symbol in the note he frames with Arango's drawing, which reads: "THE ONLY UN-OFFICIAL RIFLE THAT'S ALLOWED IN COLOMBIA IS THIS ONE, BELONGING TO DÉBORA ARANGO."¹⁷ Yet Uribe reiterates the meaning of the rifle in a harsher understanding of the Colombian state according to its necropolitical function. In his memoir, he makes the assault rifle not a liberation theology poem cum right-wing neoliberal prayer for marksmanship to kill his enemy, but rather mistakenly attributes to Sun Tzu a death-driven understanding of the state: "[T]he state must have a monopoly on life and death."¹⁸ More recently, with the benefit of hindsight, Uribe has called his request of Arango's drawing euphemistically, "a pedagogy to dissuade violence."¹⁹

At this point the reader might ask: Has this drawing been analyzed by someone besides Uribe?

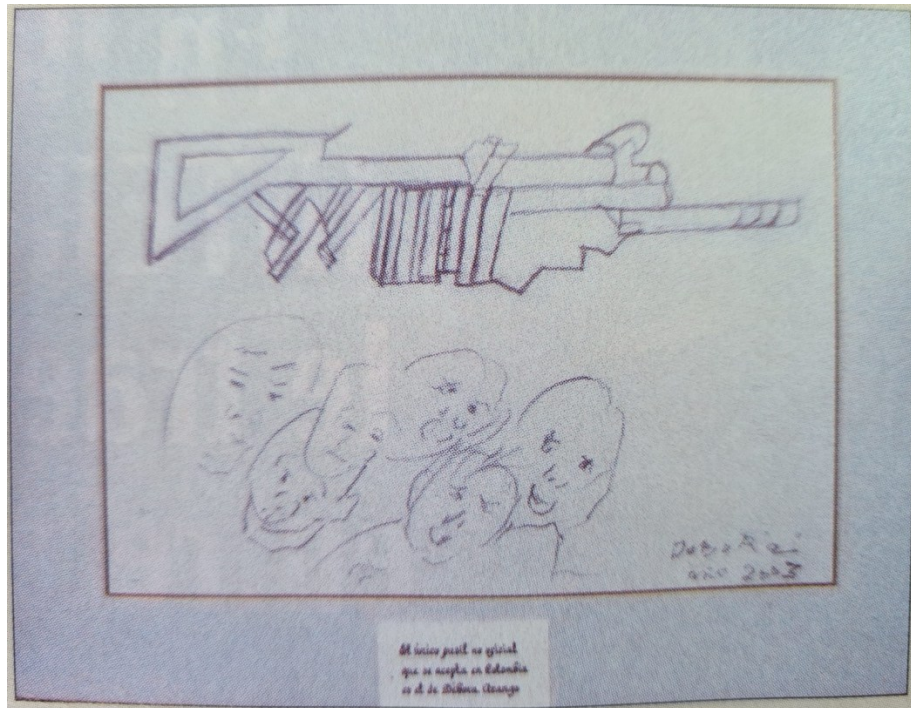


Fig. 1: “El fusil de Débora,” *Cambio*, December 22, 2003, p. 18. Courtesy of *Cambio*. Uribe’s intervention on the frame: “The only non-official assault rifle accepted in Colombia is the one from Débora Arango” [El único fusil no oficial que se acepta en Colombia es el de Débora Arango].

A reproduction of the drawing was published for the first time in 2003 in a gossip section of the *Cambio* magazine titled “SECRETOS” [SECRETS] with the title “Deborá’s Assault Rifle.”²⁰ The short paragraph published anonymously by the magazine’s editorial team limits itself to paraphrasing Uribe’s discourse and the note he placed on the frame: “According to the government, it is the only unofficial assault rifle that can be accepted by the Presidency.”²¹ In a similar fashion, the *Revista Diners* published a reproduction of the drawing accompanied by a journalistic profile of Arango’s career by Iván Beltrán Castillo, titled “The Oldest Rebel on Earth.”²² The journalist’s article abstains from interpreting the drawing, while stressing Arango’s rebelliousness. Only one caption describes Uribe’s rejection of associating doves with himself or his receipt of the drawing. Philosopher Juan Manuel Cuartas Restrepo, alternately, interprets Arango’s gesture of sending the then-president the dove drawing as “the amplifi-

cation of its image, of its symbolism” that “could well bring an air of peace,” and concludes that “President Uribe’s response showed his flagrant irresponsibility with regard to peace, but also his lack of sensitivity and intelligence.”²³ Cuartas Restrepo refrains from interpreting Arango’s drawing, but Uribe’s framing is comical to any sharp observer. Uribe claims that Arango’s rifle is the “ONLY UNOFFICIAL RIFLE,” but in fact it shows an Israeli Galil assault rifle—the standard weapon of the Colombian army, and a weapon unused by the ex-president’s most prominent enemies, the FARC guerrilla group.²⁴ What does the drawing tell us, then, when we reframe it in the constellation of images of Débora Arango’s oeuvre? What do the faces that the ex-president obliterates from his partial description express?

2_Reframing *Pathosformeln*

A recent article by Ilvar Josué Carantón furnishes one alternative interpretation to Arango’s drawing for Uribe, concluding: “[W]e would like to leave this jewel, a testimony that until her last days, the painter Arango was critical of politics in Colombia.”²⁵ Carantón, like Beltrán Castillo and Cuartas Restrepo, presupposes the critical potential of the drawing by the ‘oldest rebel on earth’ but refrains from spelling it out or giving account to Uribe’s dominant discourse on it. The art historian Christian Padilla has described the sketch as “a quick drawing of an assault rifle next to a half-grotesque and half-scared crowd.”²⁶ Nevertheless, he “hope[s]” Arango has outwitted this politician as she did others in the past and made her “‘last little move’ on this fearsome president with a rifle.”²⁷ But the art historian does not appear to be certain of its critical potential and limits himself to give the artist his vote of faith. While, as these critical comments underscore, the drawing seems at first sight more like a fragmentary sketch than a full-fledged painting from the artist, I argue that its critical imprint can be reactivated among the constellation of topoi and characters—including doves, rifles and faces—from Arango’s other work circulating in the public sphere, which I will revisit by means of Aby Warburg’s *Pathosformel*.

A *Pathosformel*, according to Warburg, is an “emotionally charged visual trope,”²⁸ a metaphor that merges an affective expression with an iconographic formula. This feature, as evoked by philosopher Giorgio Agamben, “designates an indissoluble intertwining of an emotional charge and an iconographic formula in which it is impossible to distinguish between form and content.”²⁹ I take Arango’s drawing as an intuitive

visual and seismographic imprint of Uribe's government interpreted from the vantage point of her historical artistic production. In 2003, Arango asserted that she and her painting skills were no longer at the height of their power: "There is so much to paint, but the tears come to my eyes and I cannot do it like I would like [...] I was very bold, but you start to wear down with the years."³⁰ Even if the drawing in question is not Arango's most potent work, it still is an imprint of her ethical decision to reply to Uribe's request with a visceral social critique that characterizes her work. Arango not only signs the drawing, but adds "year 2003," a rare gesture in her political oeuvre that underscores its historical context. Just as Arango mobilized her visual work against the censorship of authoritarian clerics, conservative politicians, and Franco's fascist regime, she did not submit her work to the pandering compliments of a politician seeking to exploit her cultural capital as propaganda. This *Article* attempts to dispel any suggestion that Uribe's self-promotion and indulgence were bolstered by the gift of this drawing.

3_Frame II: The Doves and the Assault Rifle

Arango's drawing of a dove that Uribe used to request the sketch of the assault rifle has not seen public light beyond a video that Uribe posted on Facebook.³¹ Iconographical analysis is difficult because of the low-quality video, but Uribe reads the inscription aloud: "Let the peace dove be always with you."³² As Arango was known to be a "devout Catholic,"³³ the dove might be considered from the Judeo-Christian tradition as a symbol of peace, the first animal that returns with a plucked leaf after the cataclysmic flood,³⁴ and a symbol often present in Arango's work. While not a dove, a white bird first appears in a work from the early 1940s described by Arango's biographer, Santiago Londoño Vélez, as "social denunciation."³⁵ This painting, titled *Dr. Uribe Cálad* (1940), portrays the head of the Departmental Asylum of Antioquia seated near a caged white bird, probably a canary, alluding to that prison.³⁶ Londoño underscores the symbolic meaning of the cage in parallel with the condition of the inmates, and notes that Arango initially wanted to portray a madwoman in a cage but the doctor explicitly requested that she abstain from doing so. Therefore, she used the doctor's hobby of collecting and caging birds to symbolize imprisonment: the white bird appears as a madwoman in captivity, removed from her own environment and made a prisoner of the psychiatric asylum.³⁷

In a later painting called *La República* [The Republic] (1957), Arango presents a white dove in the tradition of the holy spirit, with the face of Alberto Lleras Camargo, the first liberal president of the Frente Nacional.³⁸ This dove with an anthropomorphic face appears as a “powerless-puppet”³⁹ manipulated by a sinister black “squint-eyed wolf” [lobo estrábico].⁴⁰ This puppeteer rodent-canine manipulating the peace dove of the Frente Nacional represents Laureano Gómez (identified by his strabismus), the conservative ex-president who supported Lleras Camargo, promoting an intensification of violence between liberals and conservatives. This second painting suggests political manipulation that makes the white dove a marionette of a predatory conservative politician. Another painting of Arango titled *Palomas* [Doves] (undated), diverting from the expressionist style of *La República* and closer to the aesthetics of *Dr. Uribe Cálad*, shows two dead white doves, positioned with closed wings touching, claws extended in the air against a black and white background, with a hint of gray at the base of one wing. This work suggests, constellated with Arango’s image repertoire of absence of conflict and white birds, a political and symbolic commentary of a dead peace. One last painting, titled *Paz* [Peace], from around 1957, a year before the beginning of the Frente Nacional, represents ‘peace’ without the white dove, a figure of death embracing a group of terrorized living people, a ‘peace’ in which death holds together the living. Londoño Vélez explains its sardonic title as “peace achieved by means of terror and death, a mechanism not foreign to Colombian history.”⁴¹



Fig. 2: From left to right and top down: *Palomas* [Doves], undated, reproduced in *Débora Arango: El arte de la irreverencia* (Medellín: Secretaría de Educación y Cultura de Medellín, 1996), photo 81, p. 64. Detail from *Dr. Uribe Cálad*, 1940, courtesy of the Museo de Arte Moderno de Medellín. Detail from *La República* [The Republic], 1957, courtesy of the Museo de Arte Moderno de Medellín. *Paz* [Peace], circa 1957, courtesy of the Museo de Arte Moderno de Medellín.

In the constellation of Arango's work, the peace dove is first a bird that can fly but that is crippled by caging; later the dove and the Christian holy spirit intersect with the face of a politician that is manipulated and made a 'powerless puppet' by a conservative rodent-canine. These two images combine a common meaning of a victor's peace, a peace not symbolized by the dove that brings life after the cataclysm (as in the Judeo-Christian tradition), but a peace enforced by horror and death.⁴² The place of the dove in the frustrated peace enforced by terror and warfare, is revealed in the painting of the two dead doves, lifeless symbols of peace grounded by the domineering materiality of earthly terror, unable to elevate above the worldly instincts. This visually absent dove reminds of the words of Uribe mentioned above, an understanding of peace as one coerced by 'a monopoly on life and death' or because might is right.

Arango's uneasiness with Uribe's request for her to draw a rifle can be easily explained by considering the artist's expressionist works of political satire during the historical period known as *La Violencia* (1948–1958). Rifles are used by soldiers in three paintings, and in another the absence of soldiers is conspicuous via their absence. The earliest, *La masacre del 9 de abril* [The massacre of April 9], depicts the riots ignited

in 1948 by the assassination of liberal presidential candidate Jorge Eliécer Gaitán, which marked the beginning of *La Violencia*. The painting depicts in the upper left corner an apocalyptic setting, with the sky ablaze and cannons firing in the background, two soldiers, dressed in green uniform, their faces covered and armed with rifles; in the foreground, a soldier, followed by another, tramples two dead bodies and stabs a corpse. Here, the rifle is a tool to kill. A rifle also appears in *La salida de Laureano* [Laureano's Departure], a zoomorphic depiction of the coup to depose conservative politician Laureano Gómez and put in his place army general Gustavo Rojas Pinilla. The general displaces Gómez with the butt of his rifle, Gómez taking the form of a big toad carried on a litter by four vultures and followed by smaller toads, all in a procession led by a skeleton raising a flag with a skull and walking into hellfire. The gesture of the threat of violence, and what enables the change from a conservative regime into a military dictatorship, is characterized by the threat of the army general to the procession of toads and vultures that march into the fire. The rifle here does not kill but coerces. A third painting, *Melgar*, portrays the town where the military dictator Rojas Pinilla had a country house, from which he ordered the coup against Laureano Gómez in 1953;⁴³ Londoño recalls that the name of the town and the dictator were synonymous in the public discourse.⁴⁴ In this painting, three men protest the military dictatorship, two with a banner and one with a skeleton alluding to political violence. While Arango only wrote "Melgar" in the painting, Londoño explains that it stands for the text used by protesters in their banners: "Abajo Melgar" [Down with Melgar].⁴⁵ In the upper right corner is a soldier with his face covered, armed with a rifle and with bulging eyes gazing with hatred at the protesters. Here, the motif of the rifle stands for political violence used to repress those expressing their discontent with the military regime.

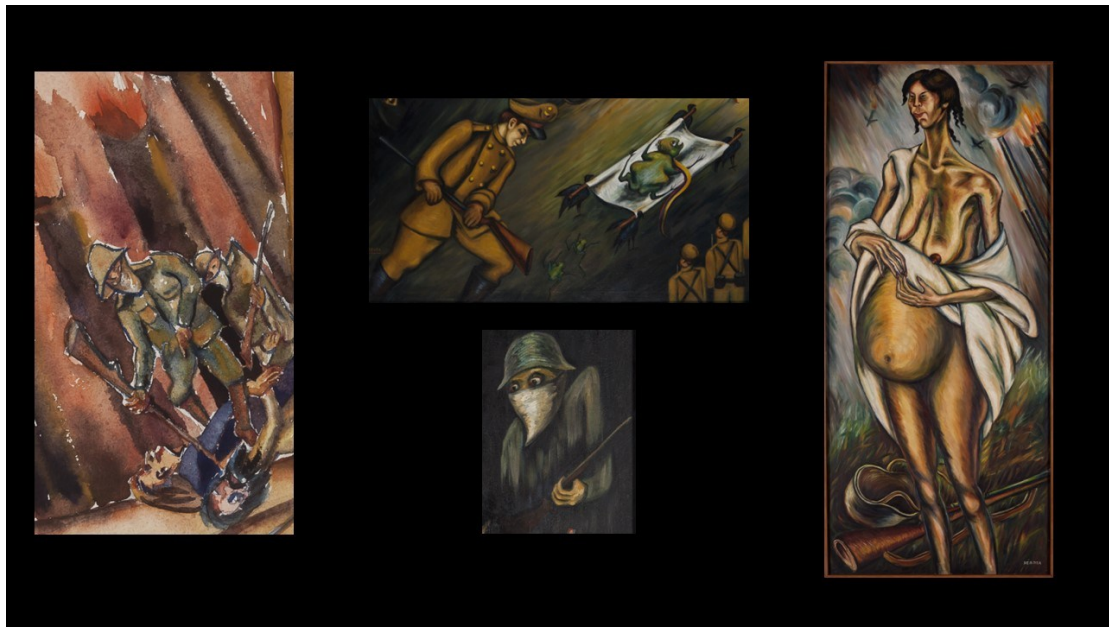


Fig. 3: From left to right and top down: Detail from *La masacre del 9 de abril* [The Massacre of April 9], 1948, courtesy of the Museo de Arte Moderno de Medellín. Detail from *La salida de Laureano* [Laureano's Exit], 1953, courtesy of the Museo de Arte Moderno de Medellín.

Maternidad y violencia [Maternity and Violence], 1950, courtesy of the Museo de Arte Moderno de Medellín. Detail from *Melgar* (1954), courtesy of the Museo de Arte Moderno de Medellín.

Last but not least, the painting *Maternidad y violencia* [Maternity and Violence] (1950) contrasts powerfully with those described above because of the symbolic absence of men who use guns and the depiction of those who survive. This painting intertwines what the artist Beatriz González calls Arango's "critical gaze" [ojo crítico] and a look of "commiseration" [conmiseración],⁴⁶ directed toward an extremely thin, half-naked pregnant woman embracing her belly, in a landscape of a theater of war illuminated by the fire of cannons and burning planes, and darkened by clouds of smoke convoluted in a gloomy sky. Here, the rifle appears in the lowest register of the painting, on the ground, lying beside a helmet behind the woman's naked knees. The disquieting composition and her troubled facial gesture asks: Was this disarmed absent father killed in war? Did he rape her?⁴⁷ This painting blends commiseration and a critical gaze in an irresolute manner in its depiction of a single mother in a state of acute social vulnerability produced by war.⁴⁸ In short, the rifle in this picture suggests a modern twist on the Biblical proverb wherein all who take the rifle shall perish with the rifle and spoil their loved ones.⁴⁹

In the sequence of rifles shown in Arango's paintings, one finds men killing men, the rifle used as an instrument of repression; ultimately, these men vanish by the same means, leaving behind a grieving and burdened single mother. My reframing of the doves and the assault rifle from the vantage point of Arango's work shows the fragile figure of the white dove, which when not caged is then manipulated, when not puppeteered is then dead, leaving space for a peace without white doves and embraced by death. In Arango's iconography the assault rifle is not a symbol of the state's legitimate monopoly of violence, nor of coercive dissuasion, but rather of the compulsive rite of those in power to enforce their position of authority. Uribe's rejection of the dove and assertion of the necropolitical tool of the assault rifle lead to consideration of what he conveniently neglected of Arango's present.

4_Frame 3: Facing the Countenances of Arango's Repertoire

The most telling fact of Uribe's partial description of Arango's 'rifle' is that he concentrates his gaze on only half of the drawing, that of the assault rifle, subjugating and capitalizing Arango's prestige for the belligerent agenda of his government. Nonetheless, for the spectator that holds her gaze, Uribe actively suppresses the six faces with which the artist supplemented Uribe's commission, producing a top-down reading of the image that, unsurprisingly, suppresses the bottom. I, instead, will make a bottom-up reading.

In this sketch, the diagonal group of faces are subsumed by the vertical position and horizontal direction of the assault rifle. This slanted positioning is also used by Arango to depict crowds or groups in works such as *La masacre del 9 de abril*, *La salida de Laureano*, *Paz*, *El vagón* and *El tren de la muerte*. Art historian Álvaro Robayo Alonso remarks: "the paintings with diagonal compositions deal with topics of extreme violence, crime, political aberration, physical deformity or prostitution."⁵⁰ Art historian Nancy Deffebach adds that these "diagonals" give a "sense of movement," or more precisely, the convulsion of political turmoil.⁵¹ These faces evoke Arango's 1940s visual indictments of the abuse of power—acts of witnessing of *La Violencia*, and zoomorphic satire of politicians—which critics like Deffebach consider her most explicitly political series.⁵² The group of faces under the assault rifle invoke her paintings of this period's "out of scale countenances,"⁵³ which as part of her expressionist strategy make subjective affection transform into a factual or realist perception. In other words,

Arango delineates grotesque and exaggerated expressions in the service of denunciation. As Robayo emphasizes with regard to the paintings of *La Violencia*, Arango “brought miseries to light, she showed them [...] denying dissimulation, concealment and oblivion.”⁵⁴ These ‘miseries’ are certainly hinted at in the coercion, death and violence of the rifle, but what do these faces tell about them?

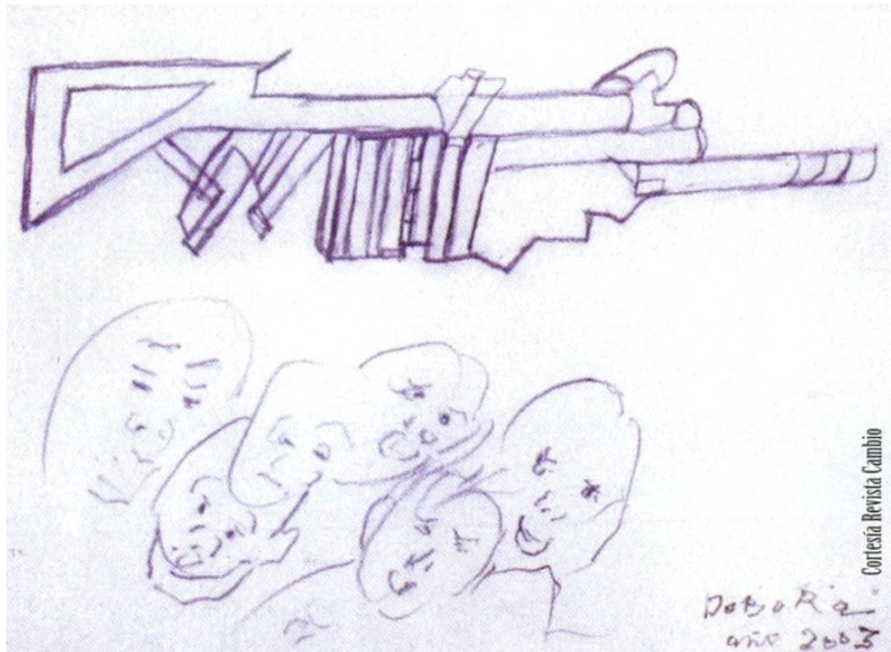


Fig. 4: *Revista Diners*, January 2004, #406: p. 12; photograph courtesy of Ilvar Josué Carantón, taken from the Archivo Débora Arango Pérez at the Universidad EAFIT in Medellín.

Doubtlessly, Arango’s use of faces over a white background, with practically no additional body parts or objects, complicates interpretation of the sketch. The ample semantic range of facial gestures might reasonably have led Beltrán Castillo, Carantón and Padilla, to their oblique presuppositions of or hopes for Arango’s visual indictment contained in her gift to Uribe. Sociologists like Georg Simmel considered “the face as a symbol not only of the spirit, but also of its unmistakable personality.”⁵⁵ More than a century later, in a similar fashion, cultural theorist Sigrid Weigel asserts that the face is “something like an image of the image [...] due to the perception at a glance, of the face as a unit in the literal instant of the blink of an eye.”⁵⁶ The hermeneutic thickness of the face has led philosophers like Emmanuel Levinas to consider the face-to-face encounter as the irreducible moment of ethical experience with the other.⁵⁷ While I am not claiming that Arango read these thinkers, I do contend that these theories resonate with her choice for faces below the rifle as a rich ethical testimony.

Having raised and acknowledged the exegetic plurality and semantic instability of interpreting countenances, I will now try to narrow down the vantage point of Arango's visual works. My interpretive effort aims to foster a plural decoding of the sketch as an expression of Colombian history as well as to warn against what the writer Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie has called "the danger of the single story."⁵⁸ More precisely, borrowing the term of Jean-François Lyotard, I wish to present a complex, pluralist and visually informed alternative framing to Arango's sketch, in explicit contrast to its co-option by the master narrative of Uribe's 'democratic security': a frame that neither shies away from paradox and inconsistency, nor renounces rigor and complexity.

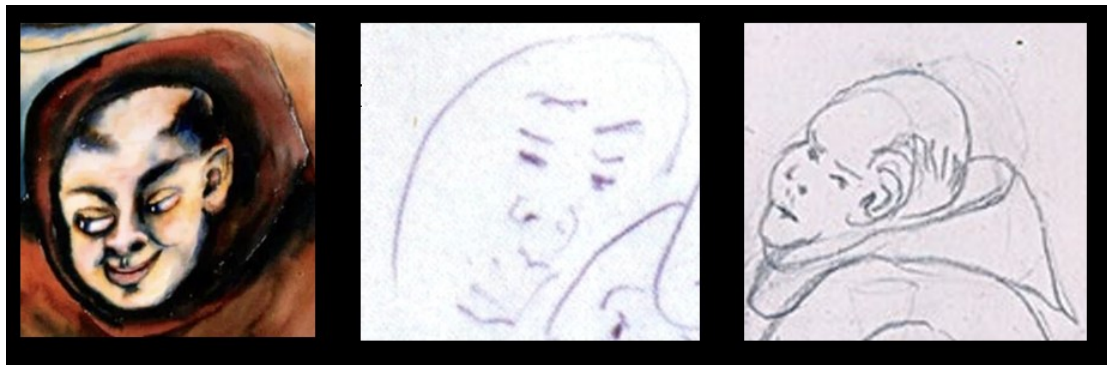


Fig. 5: Detail from *Levitación* [Levitation], 1957, courtesy of the Museo de Arte Moderno de Medellín. Detail from *Revista Diners*, January 2004, 406: p. 12; photograph courtesy of Ilvar Josué Carantón, taken from the Archivo Débora Arango Pérez at the Universidad EAFIT in Medellín. Detail from *Estudios para Levitación* [Studies for Levitation], undated, reproduced in *La virtud del valor: Débora Arango Pérez* (Medellín: Suramericana de Seguros, 1995), 8.

The first face below the assault rifle (from left to right), evokes a popular figure of Arango's paintings and sketches during the 1940s: with the bald, hood-like shape of its head and nose, it looks like *El Monje* [The Monk] (undated), sometimes also called "the friar"⁵⁹ or the Franciscan monk.⁶⁰ The painting *Levitación* [Levitation] (undated) uses this recurring character; it shows a Franciscan friar squatting on a pot, a snake biting an apple hovering above his head and his crucifix and rosary lying on the floor. Literary scholar María Antonia Gómez offers a carnivalesque interpretation of this painting, as that of an ordinary Christian with the need to defecate like any other animal.⁶¹ Moreover, she contextualizes the action captured in the image as follows: He defecates in the pot to avoid going to the bathroom at night, as a form of grotesque degradation, i.e., bringing down to earth the saint-like social status of the friar, this

representative of God defecating, placing his feces at the same level as the crucifix. Yet, socially speaking, this interpretation does not give the viewer more than a powerful metaphor.

Two lesser-known sketches illustrate in a more dramatic fashion the meaning of the friar's *cagada*, or worldly flaw (to use a popular Colombian eschatological expression), which is made more socially intelligible in the friar's worldly desires. *El Monje* is connected to these sketches and *Levitación* with objects such as the crucifix and rosary, the robe and the character of the friar. In one, we see the friar walking in a dance-like step with a bottle of wine in the left hand and a tray with two glasses in the right. Deffebach describes this as "the sketch of the friar drinking with partially disrobed youths."⁶² She interprets the sketch as a depiction of sexual abuse, stressing the half-naked young companions and the corpulent friar's gaze. Another version of the sketch makes the *cagada* of the friar even more explicit, where he appears over the aforementioned drawing masturbating, as if seen from a different angle.⁶³ The facial gesture is surprisingly similar, as what seems to be a moment of repressed autoeroticism with the drunken teenagers. In short, this first face constellated with Arango's paintings evokes a representative of God on earth, enacting the sins he claims to be a guardian of, a church's authority that does not practice what he preaches.



Fig. 6: *Levitación* [Levitation], 1957, courtesy of the Museo de Arte Moderno de Medellín. Sketches from *Estudios para Levitación* [Studies for Levitation], undated, and *El monje* [The Monk], undated, reproduced in *La virtud del valor: Débora Arango Pérez* (Medellín: Suramericana de Seguros, 1995), 8.

The second face under the assault rifle shows a countenance not clearly resembling other visual works from Arango. This face's gesture has a raised snotty and piggy nose

with an open mouth and widening eyes, in a mix of contempt and astonishment. Perhaps the only painting worth recalling in this context is *La raza en las calles* [Race on the Streets] (undated), where the spectator finds a black man sitting on a bus with “a white man” in the backseat, looking at him “with an absolutely snub-nose” and “with an air of superiority.”⁶⁴ The face is focalized, showing the ears, the neck from a zenith angle underscore this resemblance. This *Pathosformel* read from the vantage point of Arango’s paintings evokes an arrogant racist man.



Fig. 7: Detail from *La raza en la calle* [Race in the Streets], 1963, courtesy of the Museo de Arte Moderno de Medellín. Detail from *Revista Diners*, January 2004, 406: p. 12; photograph courtesy of Ilvar Josué Carantón, taken from the Archivo Débora Arango Pérez at the Universidad EAFIT in Medellín.

The third countenance, above the snotty face, is characterized by its sad resignation. It summons the facial gesture of two works from another recurring character of Arango’s paintings, Anselma. She was, to use Londoño’s words, “the faithful servant” of the artist’s family and her “nanny.”⁶⁵ In both paintings, like in the sketch, she frowns with her raised eyebrows. This visual gesture captured by Arango’s painting correlates to what might be the only anecdote that remains from the artist’s nanny. In an interview recorded by Londoño, Arango remembered how Anselma compared herself to Guineo, a popular figure from Medellín from the 1930s and 1940s, who resisted being portrayed by the artist. Anselma complained: “Oh!, and what do you say to me, you have painted me I don’t know how many times and I’ve remained downtrodden quiet.”⁶⁶ This third face under the assault rifle, taking Arango’s archive into account, speaks the *Pathosformel* of mute resignation restrained from its own self-determination.



Fig. 8: Detail from *Anselma*, undated, reproduced in *Débora Arango: El arte de la irreverencia* (Medellín: Secretaría de Educación y Cultura, 1996), 48. Detail from *Revista Diners*, January 2004, 406: p. 12; photograph courtesy of Ilvar Josué Carantón, taken from the Archivo Débora Arango Pérez at the Universidad EAFIT in Medellín. Detail *Retrato de Anselma*, undated, reproduced in *Yo fui pintando lo que fui viendo: relato de un país por Débora Arango* (Medellín: Museo de Arte Moderno de Medellín, 2010), 82.

This resigned countenance is merged into the fourth face by means of the same traces that shape them. A sad and repressed resignation turns its back to a screaming countenance in despair. This fourth *Pathosformel* of despair evokes a couple of Arango's most brutal paintings, which we have already revisited above: *Melgar* and *La masacre del 9 de abril*. The despairing screaming figure below the rifle summons forth the mortiferous shouting protester with the banner "down with the military regime," summed up in short with "Melgar" in the homonymous painting.⁶⁷ But more than *La masacre del 9 de abril*, this screaming face below the assault rifle reminds of a sketch of this painting: the screaming of a crowd accompanied by the Nazi salute, extending the right arm from the shoulder into the air with a straightened hand. In short, the face of a murderous fascist war cry appears as the other side of the countenance of repressed resignation.



Fig. 9: Detail from *Melgar*, 1954, courtesy of the Museo de Arte Moderno de Medellín. Detail from *Revista Diners*, January 2004, 406: p. 12; photograph courtesy of Ilvar Josué Carantón, taken from the Archivo Débora Arango Pérez at the Universidad EAFIT in Medellín. Detail from sketch of *La masacre del 9 de abril*, undated, reproduced in *La virtud del valor: Débora Arango Pérez* (Medellín: Suramericana de Seguros, 1995), 12.

But the face of resignation is not the only one with its back to the countenance screaming in despair. A fifth face evokes another of the paintings of what Deffebach has called Arango's 'visual indictments,' in the ones that state authorities abuse the most vulnerable. Besides Anselma, this is the only face that evokes a female figure of Arango's repertoire, in this case from the water color *La despedida* [The Farewell]: It presents a weeping woman clutching a handkerchief in front of a man in green uniform and armed with a rifle, whose back is on the spectator and who tips his hat in a farewell gesture that gives the ironic title to the watercolor. *La despedida* has been acutely contextualized by Deffebach: It was exhibited for the first time in Madrid in 1955 as part of Arango's exhibition censored by the Franco regime, and was probably produced during her sixteen months in Spain.⁶⁸ The woman in this painting, following the art historian's context-sensitive interpretation, is facing a high-ranking military officer from Franco's *Guardia Civil*, who leaves her after having beaten her (evident in her swollen lower lip and her cheek marked by a blotchy red mark), sexually abused her (suggested by the slipped garment that reveals a bare white shoulder and most of her right breast), and probably publicly humiliated by shaving her head for 'horizontal collaboration' with the enemies of the regime. In short, the woman of *La despedida* is a dissenting victim of Spanish fascism. Although in its sketchy version of Arango's gift to Uribe none of these corporal marks of violence appear, when read from the artist's repertoire, a spectator might evoke this woman's countenance. A further feature that reinforces this interpretation is the correlation between military violence symbolized by the rifle and the

face's *Pathosformel*, as synthetically interpreted by Deffebach; it evokes a woman that "has been beaten, raped, and shamed"⁶⁹ by a military authority. An alternative set of faces that resemble this sixth element of Arango's composition are the faces of babies being nursed at their mothers' breasts, in watercolors such as *En el tranvía* [In the Tram] (1954) and *Maternidad* [Maternity/Motherhood] (1976 and 1977). This alternative set of *Pathosformel* brings to mind the children raised and fed by the domineering assault rifle.



Fig. 10: Detail from *La despedida* [The Farewell], undated, courtesy of the Museo de Arte Moderno de Medellín. Detail from *Revista Diners*, January 2004, 406: p. 12; photograph courtesy of Ilvar Josué Carantón, taken from the Archivo Débora Arango Pérez at the Universidad EAFIT in Medellín. Detail from *En el tranvía* [In the Tram], 1954, courtesy of the Museo de Arte Moderno de Medellín.

The sixth and last countenance, laughing mockingly, conjures at least two faces appearing in three works of political aberration or satire that we have already revisited. It summons a *Pathosformel* already traced in *La República* and the sketches of the friar masturbating with the drunk and nude teenagers. In the first case, the water color with the puppeteered white dove, a similar mocking laughter appears in one of the "congressmen making a Nazi salute," as identified by Carantón.⁷⁰ But perhaps an even clearer evocation is the semi-nude and drunk teenager on the right of the sketch, who laughs mockingly at the disturbed face of the lecherous friar that masturbates looking at a half-naked teenage girl. In brief, the last face symbolizes disdainful laughter filled with conceit that gazes at despair. Having constellated these referents within Arango's oeuvre, I will now offer an interpretation of the sketch as an integral composition.



Fig. 11: Detail from *La República* [The Republic], 1957, courtesy of the Museo de Arte Moderno de Medellín. Detail from *Revista Diners*, January 2004, 406: p. 12; photograph courtesy of Ilvar Josué Carantón, taken from the Archivo Débora Arango Pérez at the Universidad EAFIT in Medellín. Detail from untitled sketch, undated, reproduced in *La virtud del valor: Débora Arango Pérez* (Medellín: Suramericana de Seguros, 1995), 8.

5_Reframing: The Deadly Sins and the Rifle

The *Pathosformels* derived from this constellation can be summed up in the following way: beginning with the gun, it presents the vertical rule of the assault rifle as an instrument of death and coercion. All the six faces awaken, from the vantage point of Arango's public image repertoire, paintings or sketches thematizing the abuse of power, social oppression or political violence. The first face resembles with great similarity the lascivious friar in its gesture of consummating a repressed bodily desire, an authority that falls prey to the sins it claims to protect others from. The second one evokes supercilious gesture of a white man gazing at a black man in public transportation. While the third countenance resembles the sad resignation of Anselma, the fourth face appears as the reverse side of bitter submission, screaming despair. The fifth face, with its back to despair, is the gesture of the woman humiliated and abused by fascism or a breastfed baby, a son of the assault rifle. The last countenance appears laughing with conceit, while looking face-to-face at despair.

The sketch offers an interesting resemblance to an etching made by an artist that has been associated with Arango: the Belgian James Ensor.⁷¹ The lives of these two artists resonate in their trajectories as outcasts who lived with their parents yet became national icons, the identification of their works as (proto- or post-) expressionist, their fixation in a Christian mythology, their reliance on satirical caricature to make a social criticism, as well as the censorship of their works.⁷² Ensor's *The Deadly Sins Dominated by Death* (1904),⁷³ despite having one figure more than Arango's drawing and

additional elements beyond faces (including clothes, other parts of the body, props), has noteworthy parallels: the floating assault rifle over the six countenances correlates with the winged skull hovering over the seven personifications of the deadly sins; the figures below the macabre symbols are marked by their grotesque and exaggerated gestures. Beyond the noted similarities, concrete historical evidence linking Arango's drawing to Ensor's work remains a conjecture. Nevertheless, the seven figures (including the assault rifle) in her sketch invite interpretation through the lens of the deadly sins, which were not alien to the woman who exclaimed: "Hail Mary, I am a believer! Deep down I have a very religious spirit, I am very attentive to God. I don't say Our Fathers or Hail Marys, but I tell God everything."⁷⁴

Like in Ensor's *The Deadly Sins Dominated by Death*, some of Arango's visual indictments tend to place at the top of the composition an allegorical symbol of death, political corruption, or sin: the floating apple-biting snake in *Levitación*, the squinted-eyed rodent-canine manipulating the peace dove that elevates above *La República*, or the hovering assault rifle over the faces. The assault rifle, read allegorically from the point of view of this Catholic doctrine, appears as a symbol of Wrath that is endemically designed to produce death and coercion. Five faces fit smoothly within the violation of moral law encompassed by this doctrine: The lascivious friar on the left evokes Lust. The fourth figure of sad and mute resignation in its disregard and merging with the face that lies behind it, in despair, in despondency and hopelessness, both call to mind Sloth. The last face on the right embodies Pride, with its mocking and conceited laughter gazing at despair, just like the second countenance with its raised snotty and piggy nose.

This interpretation is not flawless or completely consistent. Besides the fact that assigning a specific emotion to a face is debatable,⁷⁵ in the framework of the sins, two of them appear out of the orbit of the image constellation I have assembled: Gluttony and Envy. Moreover, the second and the sixth faces overlap with the sin of Pride. Furthermore, the fifth face does not fit in this framework, because it should accordingly be Gluttony, but neither the breastfeeding babies nor the woman abused by the fascist militiaman appear to fit this interpretation; nor does it seem to be a representation of Envy. Even though the interpretation of Arango's sketch as a representation of the canonized deadly sins remains inconsistent, it still summons up some of its key elements: Wrath,

Lust, Pride, and Sloth. In this sense, despite being self-evidently a sketch—per principle provisional, processual, incomplete—if read from the vantage point of Arango’s works, it evokes elements of a theological and visual indictment.

Arango’s sketch of the faces dominated by the assault rifle remains powerful to the extent that it evokes multiple and contradictory references within the orbit of her own work or other artists like Ensor. Deffebach has recently underscored how Arango’s work, at times hard to frame in a historical referential sense, as in her depictions of wounded and dead bodies in boxcars, remain powerful images to the extent that they evoke multiple and disparate referents: the massacre of the United Fruit Company, the Colombian government of labor striking laborers in the 1930s, the government’s mistreatment of rebels from Puerto Berrío in the late 1940s, or the Shoa.⁷⁶ Arango’s rifle hovering over faces revolves around the conflict of what an old, canonized painter in the twilight of her life can depict, when the revamping of those she historically criticized seized the occasion to exploit her work as cultural capital. As I have shown in this article, the sketch-like presence of this work circulated in magazines during Uribe’s government exceeds the ex-president’s amputated discursive framing of Arango’s depiction of an assault rifle. Arango’s depiction of the faces dominated by the assault rifle is a Trojan horse artwork: commissioned naively by the ex-president, exhibited in his office at the Casa de Nariño, now probably displayed in his villa, framed discursively in his memoirs, and despite all this, it remains an evocative ‘visual indictment’ of its commissioner. The incongruity of the faces exceeds the frame of Uribe’s coherent narrative of the state’s monopoly on life and death, of the narrow-minded seriousness of an assault rifle as dissuasion and means of national unity. The reframed constellation of the disappeared peace dove, the domineering rifle and the faces below invokes, the least to say, a visual indictment with theological undertones. Arango’s rifle, in the ex-president’s hands, has backfired on him.

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to the editor, Isabella Kalte, and the two anonymous peer reviewers for their insightful comments, which enriched this *Article*, particularly in relation to Arango’s oeuvre. For assistance in accessing images, I extend my thanks to the Grupo de Colecciones y Servicios at the Biblioteca Nacional de Colombia in Bogotá for providing a digital copy of the *Revista Diners* article; art historian Ilvar Josué Carantón

for sharing a valuable image of Arango's rifle from the Universidad EAFIT archive in Medellín, and Dora Escobar from the Museo de Arte Moderno de Medellín for her support. I also appreciate the thoughtful discussions and insights shared by Laura Judith Botello León, lawyers Alfonso Aljure Camacho and Thomas Riedel, philosopher Daniel Moreno, and artists Paola Martí and Carmen Elvira Brigard.

Endnotes

- ¹ Álvaro Uribe Vélez, *No Lost Causes* (New York: Celebra, 2012), 149. See Álvaro Uribe Vélez, "Una disuasión contradictoria," *Facebook*, June 26, 2021, <<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=506209600616267>>.
- ² Uribe, *No Lost Causes*, 149.
- ³ Uribe, *No Lost Causes*, 149.
- ⁴ Uribe, *No Lost Causes*, 149.
- ⁵ Mari Carmen Ramírez and Héctor Olea, *Inverted Utopias: Avant-garde Art in Latin America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 8. Despite her denial to identify as a 'feminist,' critics insist in her protofeminist "ethical gaze on indigenous and black female populations," see Deborah Martin, *Painting, Literature and Film in Colombian Feminine Culture, 1940–2005: Of Border Guards, Nomads and Women* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2012), 33.
- ⁶ See for example: Álvaro Robayo Alonso, *La crítica a los valores hegemónicos en el arte colombiano* (Bogotá: Uniandes, 2001) or Sven Schuster, "Arte y violencia: la obra de Débora Arango como lugar de memoria," *Revista de Estudios Colombianos*, 37, no. 38 (2011): 35–40.
- ⁷ "feminismo combativo." Schuster, "Arte," 35, my translation.
- ⁸ Coleen Becker, "Aby Warburg's Pathosformel as methodological paradigm," *Journal of Art Historiography* 9 (2013): 1–25, here 1.
- ⁹ I borrow this expression from Nancy Deffebach, "Visual Indictments: Images by Débora Arango Protesting the Sexual Abuse of Women and Adolescents," *Bienal 12 Seminario Internacional* (Porto Alegre: Fundação Bienal de Artes Visuais do Mercosul, 2020), 516–521, here 521.
- ¹⁰ Walter Benjamin, *Walter Benjamin—Selected Writings: Volume 4, 1938–1940* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), 397.
- ¹¹ Uribe, *No Lost Causes*, 149.
- ¹² Álvaro Uribe Vélez, "Condecoración con la orden de Boyacá en grado de comendador a Débora Arango," *Sitio de Archivo de la Presidencia 2002–2010*, November 21, 2003, <<http://historico.presidencia.gov.co/discursos/discursos2003/noviembre/discursomedellin.htm>>.
- ¹³ The first political co-option of Arango's work was undertaken by the conservative politician Laureano Gómez in 1940. He used an exhibition of her nude artworks organized by the liberal, then-minister of education Jorge Eliécer Gaitán, to discredit his rivals politically and morally. For a recent retelling of this forceful and agonistic appropriation, see Carlos Granés, *Delirio Americano: Una historia cultural y política de América Latina* (Bogotá: Taurus, 2022), 219–220.
- ¹⁴ Ilvar Josué Carantón, "Débora Arango y la Política," *Revista Académica Etesis*, 14 (2023): 46–65, here: 61; on her trajectory from censorship to canonization see Nancy Deffebach, "The Art of Débora Arango: From Censorship to Canonization in Colombia," in *Proceedings of the 34th World*

- Congress of Art History*, eds. Shao Dazhen, Fan Di'an, and Lao Zhu (Beijing: Commercial Press, 2019), 917–926.
- ¹⁵ “La gente me ve a mí con palomas y no me cree. A mí mándame un fusil.” Álvaro Uribe Vélez, “Palabras del presidente Uribe durante el XVII Encuentro de Dirigentes del Suroeste Antioqueño: GOBIERNO QUIERE RECUPERAR LA CONFIANZA DE LOS COLOMBIANOS,” in *Sitio de Archivo de la Presidencia 2002–2010*, December 6, 2003, <http://historico.presidencia.gov.co/prensa_new/sne/2003/diciembre/06/08062003.htm>.
- ¹⁶ “Señor, danos la riqueza en conciencia, danos también manos limpias para recoger las cosechas y bendecir el universo. Haznos invencibles con el poder del amor. Y para defender todo esto la libertad, la paz y la justicia, danos coraje, un rifle y buena puntería.” Gonzalo Arango qtd. in Uribe, “Palabras.”
- ¹⁷ Uribe, *No Lost Causes*, 149, see also “Palabras.”
- ¹⁸ Uribe, *No Lost Causes*, 149. Sociologist Max Weber coined the term “das Monopol legitimer physischer Gewaltsamkeit [the monopoly of legitimate physical violence].” Max Weber, *Politik als Beruf* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2004), 6.
- ¹⁹ “una pedagogía para disuadir la violencia.” Uribe, “Una disuasión,” 0:46–0:48.
- ²⁰ “El fusil de Débora,” *Cambio*, December 22, 2003, 18.
- ²¹ “Según el Gobierno, se trata del único fusil no oficial que puede aceptar la Presidencia.” “El fusil de Débora,” *Cambio*, December 22, 2003, 18.
- ²² Iván Beltrán Castillo, “Débora Arango: La rebelde más vieja de la tierra,” *Revista Diners*, January 2004, 406: 10–14.
- ²³ “la amplificación de su imagen, de su simbología, del mensaje de una anciana que ha pintado como ninguno en Colombia las ridiculeces del poder, bien podría traer un aire de paz.” Juan Manuel Cuartas Restrepo, *Pedagogías de la violencia en Colombia* (Cali: Universidad del Valle, 2018), 49–50.
- ²⁴ See Margarita Rodríguez, “Las historias de 5 armas de guerra y cómo se cree que llegaron a manos de las FARC en Colombia,” in *BBC Mundo*, June 27, 2017, <<https://www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias-america-latina-40385183>>.
- ²⁵ “Para cerrar, dejemos por aquí esta última joya, muestra de que hasta sus últimos días la maestra Arango mantuvo sus posiciones críticas frente a la política en Colombia.” Carantón, “Débora,” 62.
- ²⁶ “un dibujo rápido de un fusil junto a una multitud medio grotesca y medio asustada.” Christian Padilla, *Arte del siglo XX en Colombia (contado en 12 obras)* (Bogotá: BAU Books Art Utopía, 2021), 156.
- ²⁷ “ojalá le haya hecho también ‘la última jugadita’ a este temible presidente con fusil.” Padilla, *Arte del siglo XX en Colombia*, 156.
- ²⁸ Becker, “Aby,” 1.
- ²⁹ Giorgio Agamben, “Aby Warburg and the Nameless Science,” *Potentialities: Collected Essays in Philosophy*, transl. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999): 89–103, here: 61.
- ³⁰ Arango qtd. in Juan Forero, “Débora Arango, 98, Painter of Politically Charged Themes, Dies,” in *The New York Times*, December 13, 2005, <<https://www.nytimes.com/2005/12/13/arts/debora-arango-98-painter-of-politically-charged-themes-dies.html>>.
- ³¹ See Uribe, “Una disuasión,” 0:03–0:52.
- ³² “La paloma de la paz lo acompañe siempre.” Uribe, “Una disuasión,” 0:34–0:38.

- 33 Deffebach, “The Art,” here: 917; see also Santiago Londoño Vélez.
- 34 See *Bible*, Gen. 8: 6–12.
- 35 Santiago Londoño Vélez, “Paganismo, denuncia y sátira en Débora Arango,” *Boletín Cultural y Bibliográfico* 22, no. 4 (1985): 3–16, here: 7.
- 36 Besides Londoño’s historical reference in *Débora Arango: vida de pintora* (Bogotá: Ministerio de Cultura, 1997), 128, the morphology of the white bird, particularly its tail and size, indicates that it is indeed a canary. Despite this fact, I kept this image as part of the constellation because of how it resonates not only with the sketch of the assault rifle, the faces, and the white bird but also with the homonyms of the Uribes involved in them.
- 37 Londoño, *Débora*, 128.
- 38 The Frente Nacional was a political agreement in Colombia between the Liberal and Conservative parties that lasted from 1958 to 1974 and was aimed to end the bipartisan conflict known as *La Violencia* [The Violence]. To do so, it alternated the presidency and evenly shared government positions between the two parties.
- 39 Martin, “The Female Body,” 78.
- 40 Sara Fernández, *Historia y arte. Una propuesta desarrollada en Débora Arango y sus obras sobre el período de la Violencia* (Medellín: Universidad Bolivariana, 2016), 146.
- 41 “una paz lograda con terror y muerte, mecanismo que no es extraño en la historia colombiana.” Londoño Vélez, “Débora Arango, la más importante y polémica Pintora colombiana,” *Nómadas*, no. 6 (1997): 1–15, here: 14.
- 42 See how the historian Sven Schuster interprets this painting in the political context of the 1950s, Schuster, “Arte,” 39.
- 43 See Adolfo León Atehortúa, “El golpe de Rojas y el poder de los militares,” *Folios. Segunda época* 31 (2010): 33–48.
- 44 See Londoño, *Débora*, 201.
- 45 Londoño, *Débora*, 201.
- 46 Beatriz González, “Débora Arango y una revolución inédita en el arte colombiano,” *ARTES La revista* 1, no. 2 (2001): 6–11, here: 10.
- 47 Rape as a topic is raised by another sketch that is undated, see Débora Arango, *Débora Arango: El arte de la irreverencia* (Medellín: Edúcame, 1996), 92.
- 48 See how Martin interprets the tensions of this maternity, “The Female Body,” 60.
- 49 See *Bible*, Matthew 26:52.
- 50 “los cuadros con composiciones en diagonal tratan de temas de extrema violencia, crimen, aberración política, deformidad física o prostitución.” Álvaro Robayo Alonso, *La crítica a los valores hegemónicos en el arte colombiano* (Bogotá: Convenio Andrés Bello y Ediciones Uniandes, 2001), 32.
- 51 Deffebach, “Artist,” 43.
- 52 See Deffebach, “Visual Indictments,” 521 and “Artist,” 52.
- 53 “fuera de escala de los rostros.” González, “Débora,” 10.
- 54 “sacar estas miserias a la luz, mostrarlas [...] le niega el camino de la disimulación, el ocultamiento o el olvido.” Robayo Alonso, *La crítica*, 23.

- 55 “Dass wir das Gesicht als das Symbol nicht nur des Geistes, sondern seiner als einer unverwechselbaren Persönlichkeit empfinden.” Georg Simmel, “Die ästhetische Bedeutung des Gesichts,” in *Brücke und Tür: Essays des Philosophen zur Geschichte, Religion, Kunst und Gesellschaft*, eds. Michael Landmann and Margarete Susman (Stuttgart: Koehler, 1957), 153–159, here 155.
- 56 “so etwas wie ein Bild des Bildes [...] Diese Stellung verdankt sich der Wahrnehmung auf einen Blick, des Angesichts als einer Einheit im buchstäblichen Augen-Blick.” Sigrid Weigel, “Das Gesicht als Artefakt,” in *Gesichter Kulturgeschichtliche Szenen aus der Arbeit am Bildnis des Menschen*, ed. Sigrid Weigel (München: Wilhelm Fink, 2013), 7–32, here 24.
- 57 Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, transl. A. Lingis (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1979), 79.
- 58 Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, “The Danger of a Single Story by Chimamanda Adichie (Transcript),” in *The Singju Post*, November 30, 2014, <<https://singjupost.com/danger-single-story-chimamanda-adichie-transcript/>>.
- 59 Deffebach, “Visual Indictments,” 520.
- 60 Londoño, *Débora*, 92.
- 61 María Antonia Gómez Goyeneche, *Sacralidad y transgresión en la literatura y el arte: Tomás Carrasquilla y Débora Arango* (Cali: Universidad del Valle, 2018), 183–184.
- 62 Deffebach, “Visual Indictments,” 520.
- 63 These sketches are reproduced in *La virtud del valor: Débora Arango Pérez* (Medellín: Suramericana de Seguros, 1995), 8. Another one that I am not foregrounding stages a similar scene, reproduced in *Débora Arango: El arte de la irreverencia* (Medellín: Secretaría de Educación y Cultura, 1996), 93: it shows the lascivious friar embracing and exchanging caresses with a woman sitting on his lap, which later, apparently Arango transformed into a watercolor titled *El placer* (*The Pleasure*), in which the same figure appears in civilian clothes, without the robe and the crucifix.
- 64 “un hombre blanco a su espalda, con la nariz absolutamente respingada, dentro de un aire de superioridad.” Gómez, *Sacralidad*, 214.
- 65 “la fiel servidora [...] niñera.” Londoño, *Débora*, 20.
- 66 “¡ay!, qué me dice a mí que me ha pintado no sé cuántas veces y me he quedado calladita.” Londoño, *Débora*, 32.
- 67 “The third protester carries the main banner, in the one that the painter omitted the word ‘down’ and wrote only ‘Melgar’ [El tercer manifestante porta la pancarta principal, en la que la pintora omitió la palabra ‘abajo’ y escribió únicamente ‘Melgar’], que da título a la obra.” Londoño, *Débora*, 201.
- 68 See Deffebach, “The Art,” 921, and “Visual Indictments,” 519.
- 69 Deffebach, “Visual Indictments,” 520.
- 70 “los congresistas hacen el saludo nazi.” Carantón, “Débora,” 59.
- 71 This parallel has been made by Carlos Arturo Fernández Uribe, “Débora Arango,” *Débora Arango, Patrimonio Vivo* (Medellín: MAMM, 2001), 5–7, here 5.
- 72 Ensor’s works were cataloged as “degenerate art [entartete Kunst]” and later censored posthumously in Nazi Germany. See Christoph Zuschlag, “‘Chambers of Horrors of Art’ and ‘Degenerate Art’: On Censorship in the Visual Arts in Nazi Germany,” in *Suspended License: Censorship and the Visual Arts*, ed. Elizabeth C. Childs (Seattle: A Samuel & Althea Stroum Book, 1997), 210–234,

here 213. In the case of the censorship of Arango's works from the 1930s to the 1950s see Deffebach, "The Art," 917–922.

⁷³ Ensor's etching can be seen in the following webpage from the Museum of Fine Arts Ghent: <https://www.mskgent.be/en/collection/1998-b-126>.

⁷⁴ Londoño, *Débora Arango*, 230.

⁷⁵ Some researchers, particularly those following the influential 'basic emotions paradigm,' consider that "basic emotions," such as joy, distress, anger, fear and surprise, "are universal and innate." Dylan Evans, *Emotion: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 5. Anthropologist Paul Ekman's founding study used photographs with facial gestures to argue that these basic emotions are a cross-cultural phenomenon, see Evans, *Emotion*, 4, 9. Of course, the 'deadly sins' interpretation, as the one offered here, adds another layer of complexity, one of moral judgement and its subjectivation.

⁷⁶ See Deffebach, "The Artist," 53.