

ARCHIVE STUDIES

Color-Luz, 1958: Loló Soldevilla and a Shared Modernity

By Juan Sarracino

The anniversary exhibition: one gallery, twenty-one names, and a broader reading of Cuban art

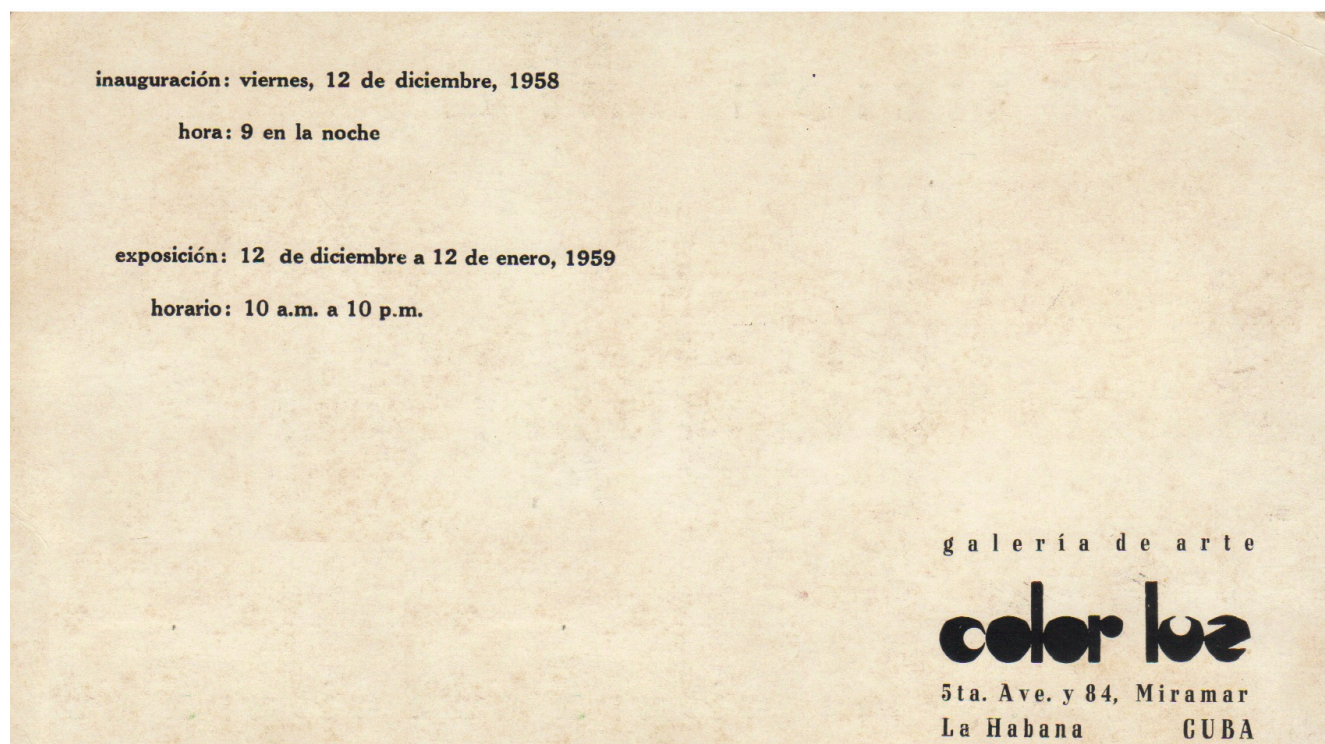


Image B. Schedule, address, and logo on the anniversary announcement. Full reproduction of the supplied image; not an installation photograph.

December 12, 1958 – January 12, 1959 · Miramar, Havana

A gallery's significance lies not only in the works it presents, but also in the relationships it makes possible. A Color-Luz announcement dated December 1958 allows us to examine that second dimension. Under the heading "Exposición aniversario" (Anniversary Exhibition) and the phrase "pintura y escultura cubana 1958" (Cuban Painting and Sculpture 1958), it brings together nineteen names in painting and two in sculpture. Among the latter is "loló." The artist associated with founding the space also appears within its exhibition program.^[1]

The roster invites us to reconsider an overly narrow identification of Color-Luz with a single group. The document does not announce an exhibition of the Ten Concrete Painters. It presents a broader gathering, bringing Abela, Amelia Peláez, Cundo Bermúdez, and Mirta Cerra together with Arcay, Oraá, Sandú Darié, Mijares, and other artists. Its interest lies in that breadth of participation, not in making every participant a representative of the same visual language.^[1]

The hypothesis guiding this reading is that the anniversary presents Color-Luz as a meeting place whose identity cannot be exhausted by affiliation with a group. To understand Loló Soldevilla's role, we should consider her production alongside her involvement in creating that space. The invitation allows us to observe their intersection; it cannot, by itself, reconstruct every decision that made it possible.

An anniversary is not a gallery's founding

The side carrying visitor information announces the opening for Friday, December 12, 1958, at nine in the evening. The scheduled exhibition period extends through January 12, 1959, with visiting hours from ten in the morning to ten at night. The address is clearly printed: "5ta. Ave. y 84, Miramar," "La Habana," "CUBA." These are the terms of the announcement, not independent confirmation that the schedule was followed without changes.^[1]

"Inauguración" here designates the opening of the anniversary exhibition. It should not be transferred to the founding of the gallery. External sources provide that context: the study of Cuban modernity published by the Caribbean Cultural Institute at Pérez Art Museum Miami and the presentation of Passerelle's exhibition of Cuban abstraction both place the founding of Color-Luz in 1957 and attribute it jointly to Loló Soldevilla and Pedro de Oraá. This information is not printed in the two images; it comes from those institutional accounts.^[2, 3]

Distinguishing the dates allows us to acknowledge Loló without erasing her cofounder. It also prevents us from extracting a precision from "anniversary" that the announcement does not supply: it does not specify which anniversary is being celebrated or state that December 12 coincided exactly with the opening of the premises. The document commemorates an undertaking already begun; it does not announce its inception.

Twenty-one names, not twenty-one works

Under "PINTORES" (Painters), the names appear in this order: abela; amelia peláez; arcay; cabrera moreno; cundo bermúdez; fayad jamís; ferrer; hugo consuegra; lópez nussa; mariano; maximiliano gonzález; mijares; mirta cerra; oraá; raúl; sandú darié; serra badué; soriano; tapia ruano. Under "ESCUPTORES" (Sculptors) are loló and oliva. The forms printed in the document, including abbreviated names, are retained here.^[1]

The count represents twenty-one participant entries. It does not establish the number of works: each name could have been represented by one or several pieces. Nor does it establish the artists'

physical presence at the opening, the sources of loans, or the artists' ownership of the works. Neither side includes an inventory, individual titles, dimensions, media, or prices.^[1]

The painters' list follows the alphabetical order of the printed names. This detail limits a hierarchical interpretation of their placement: there is no basis for turning Abela's first position or Tapia Ruano's last into a ranking of importance. Brief forms—"raúl," "mariano," "ferrer"—suggest an economy of identification, although they do not establish what each recipient knew. In a documentary database, these forms should remain distinct from the full names that subsequent research may establish.

The absence of names such as Luis Martínez Pedro or Mario Carreño belongs to this particular list. It does not demonstrate deliberate exclusion, disagreement with the gallery, or separation from Cuban abstraction. An exhibition is a situated selection, not the complete census of a tendency.

An artistic identity does not mean an exclusive program

The Pérez Art Museum Miami study describes the inaugural exhibition of 1957 as a diverse gathering of artists, including Amelia Peláez, Sandú Darié, Raúl Martínez, and Wifredo Arcay. "Pintura y escultura cubana" (Cuban Painting and Sculpture) appears there as the title of that opening. Its reappearance in the 1958 announcement suggests continuity in how the gallery presented itself, without implying that the two selections of works were identical.^[1, 2]

In the anniversary exhibition, the shared frame is "Cuban," not "concrete." That choice is not equivalent to a nationalist manifesto or a statement of a uniform national style. It names an artistic field within which the gallery brings different artists together. Belonging to that field does not require every work to share a formal vocabulary or every artist to be a member of an association.

This yields a fundamental distinction: a gallery can advance a particular artistic inquiry while also welcoming a broader range of participants. Color-Luz's documented connection with abstraction does not authorize us to classify every exhibition it held as exclusively concrete. Conversely, this broad roster does not establish that the institution had abandoned its interest in abstraction.^[1-3]

What the announcement supports is more precise: on this occasion, the gallery presented itself through twenty-one names and two sections. Its program must be studied exhibition by exhibition. The specialization of a space and the composition of a particular show are not interchangeable categories.

Loló: exhibiting and enabling others to exhibit

The name "loló" appears under "ESCULTORES," receiving the same typographical treatment as "oliva." This side carries no portrait of the founder, autobiographical statement, or honorary distinction. Within the announcement, Loló is a participant assigned to a specific section; her founding role is established through the complementary documentation.^[1-3]

This dual position shifts the focus of interpretation. It is not enough to say that Soldevilla had a gallery in which she showed her work. The project's significance also lies in providing a place where other artists could appear together. A work proposes relationships among its elements; an exhibition proposes relationships among works and artistic trajectories. These are not equivalent operations, but both shape what the public can perceive and compare.

The anniversary allows us to consider this activity as part of Loló's cultural work, without making her the sole author of the selection. The images identify no curator, committee, lenders, or designer. Nor do they permit every decision to be attributed to her individually. The cofounding with Oraá makes it especially important to keep the initiative's shared dimension in view.

The contribution at issue is not the retrospective prestige of assembling names now recognized. It is the construction of a situation of visibility: different artists appear under one heading, at one address, and within a shared schedule. The announcement preserves the public form of that relationship. Studying it expands Soldevilla's history beyond an inventory of her own objects.

The persistence of sculpture

Loló's placement among the sculptors deserves to be read alongside other period sources previously examined. The VI National Salon of 1953 lists three sculptures: *Máscara* (Mask) and *Figura* (Figure), in bronze, and *Leda y el cisne* (Leda and the Swan), in stone. The VIII Salon of 1956 lists two oils—*Sonata para piano y cello* (Sonata for Piano and Cello) and *Sonata núm. 5* (Sonata No. 5)—and two works in metal: *Escultura B-dimensional* (B-dimensional Sculpture), retaining the catalogue's spelling, and *Escultura policromada* (Polychrome Sculpture). The 1958 announcement again places her in sculpture, this time without identifying objects. ^[1, 5, 6]

The comparison documents sculptural participation at three moments and a simultaneous presence in painting and sculpture in 1956. It does not demonstrate a linear progression from figuration toward geometry or establish that the works of 1958 were those listed two years earlier. It does, however, prevent sculpture from being treated as a preliminary phase that her painting had superseded.

It also invites us to reconsider the use of exhibition categories. "Sculptors" does not necessarily mean figures in the round. A relief, an assemblage, or a construction can address three-dimensional problems without conforming to that model. The images do not allow us to determine which of these possibilities applied to Loló in this exhibition.

The productive question, therefore, is not what appearance we might imagine from the name, but which specific objects prompted that classification. The category is documented; the works' material character remains open to investigation.

The anniversary of 1958 and the presentation of the Ten

Color-Luz's historical association with the Ten Concrete Painters is indispensable, but it should not absorb the gallery's entire history. The accounts consulted from Pérez Art Museum Miami and Passerelle place the group's formation in 1959; the documentation for *Concrete Cuba* links the exhibition *10 pintores concretos exponen pinturas y dibujos* (Ten Concrete Painters Exhibit Paintings and Drawings) to Color-Luz's second anniversary, also in 1959. This is context reconstructed later, not information contained in the invitation. ^[2-4]

The possible earlier development of affinities does not make the two exhibitions interchangeable. The announcement of December 1958 has its own title, its own roster, and its own division of media. It does not use the name of the Ten or contain a collective declaration of principles. Its evidence should be preserved rather than rewritten as a group's founding document. ^[1]

The distinction enables a more complex understanding: networks of relationships, exhibition spaces, and named groups can overlap without coinciding exactly. A gallery is not the same thing

as a group; sharing premises is not equivalent to endorsing a program; appearing alongside other artists does not establish direct influence.

The anniversary thus acquires an interest of its own. It need not be reduced to a prelude to a later event. It documents a way of bringing Cuban art together that deserves study for its visible decisions and the questions it leaves open.

Modernity is also present in the printed object

Although we cannot see the works exhibited, we do have a visual object available for analysis: the announcement itself. On the roster side, green typography organizes a predominantly vertical field. The names form a central column; the title and the reference to painting and sculpture occupy the sides. Serif letters in the names coexist with heavier lettering along the edges.^[1]

The composition requires reading in more than one direction. The lateral texts define the ensemble and function almost as a frame. One may interpret the hierarchy as giving prominence to the event and the sequence of participants rather than to an individual figure: there is no reproduced artwork or disproportionately emphasized name within the roster.

On the calendar side, the black “color luz” logo is concentrated in the lower-right area. Its thick strokes and rounded contours form a compact unit, contrasting with the widely spaced letters of “galería de arte.” Dates and hours occupy other areas, while a broad unprinted surface separates these blocks. This relationship between typographical mass and empty space is an observable graphic decision, not an imagined description of the installation.^[1]

The logo can be read as a composition in its own right, but the document does not identify its designer. It would not be rigorous to attribute it to Oraá or Loló solely because of their connection with the gallery. Nor can the announcement’s green be transferred to the colors of the paintings. Formal analysis of the printed object and analysis of the works are separate investigations.

A place, a schedule, and a material memory

The Miramar address situates the announcement in a specific part of Havana. Hours from ten in the morning to ten at night propose a broad visiting interval, with an evening opening. They do not provide information about closed days, visitor numbers, the public’s social composition, or commercial activity. Those questions would require additional testimony or records.^[1]

The announced period crosses the change from 1958 to 1959. It should be preserved in full in an exhibition record: reducing it to “1958” loses part of its schedule, while dating it only to “1959” erases the planned opening. Changes of program, interruptions, or statements by the participants cannot be inferred from those dates.

The reproduced copy carries a stamp from the Museo Nacional’s library in Havana and handwritten registration marks. Such marks belong to the material history of the document. They do not relocate the exhibition to the museum, certify the works, or make that institution the organizer. Nor do they establish the physical copy’s present whereabouts. Reproductions should preserve them: what initially looks like graphic interference may be archival information.^[1]

From names to works: a lead and its limits

The absence of an inventory does not require us to abandon identification of the works; it requires another kind of link. A specific lead appears in a 2021 Sotheby's record: lot 323, by Loló Soldevilla, is described as an oil-on-jute and wood construction signed and dated 1956, and its exhibition history includes this anniversary show of December 1958–January 1959. That relationship is an assertion made in the 2021 catalogue; the roster of 1958 does not establish it. ^[7]

Its value lies in proposing a possible verification. The documents supporting that exhibition history, any labels and photographs, and the correspondence between record and object would need examination. The entry is not used here to authenticate the piece or retrospectively complete the exhibition's inventory.

Research should advance on two levels. The first would reconstruct the objects: titles, materials, dimensions, lenders, and installation photographs. The second would reconstruct the exhibition as an event: press announcements, correspondence, distribution of the printed notice, critical reception, and selection decisions. A sales record, if one exists, might help identify works, but it need not be the center of the account.

The absence of reproductions makes the exhibition's history an open investigation, not an opportunity to assign it paintings that seem stylistically compatible. Between “an artist was announced” and “this piece was exhibited,” there must be an identifiable documentary chain.

The space as part of the legacy

The anniversary exhibition offers a precise way to recognize Loló Soldevilla's significance: it enables us to consider her work as the production of objects and as participation in building a shared space. In the announcement she is not a figure outside the scene being assembled; she appears within it, among the sculptors. At the same time, the corroborated history of the gallery places her, alongside Pedro de Oraá, at its origin. ^[1–3]

The breadth of the roster does not establish harmonious coexistence without disagreements or a uniform aesthetic community. It demonstrates something more bounded and valuable: Color-Luz announced an anniversary through a gathering of names not presented under the designation of a single group. This form of self-presentation deserves a place in its history alongside its role in abstraction.

The point is not to diminish the significance of the Ten, but to prevent knowledge of what came later from obscuring what this document says. The gallery was not simply a place that later history assigned to a group. In December 1958 it presented itself as a space for Cuban painting and sculpture.

An artist's legacy can also reside in the space she helped open so that other works could be seen.

Source document: participant roster

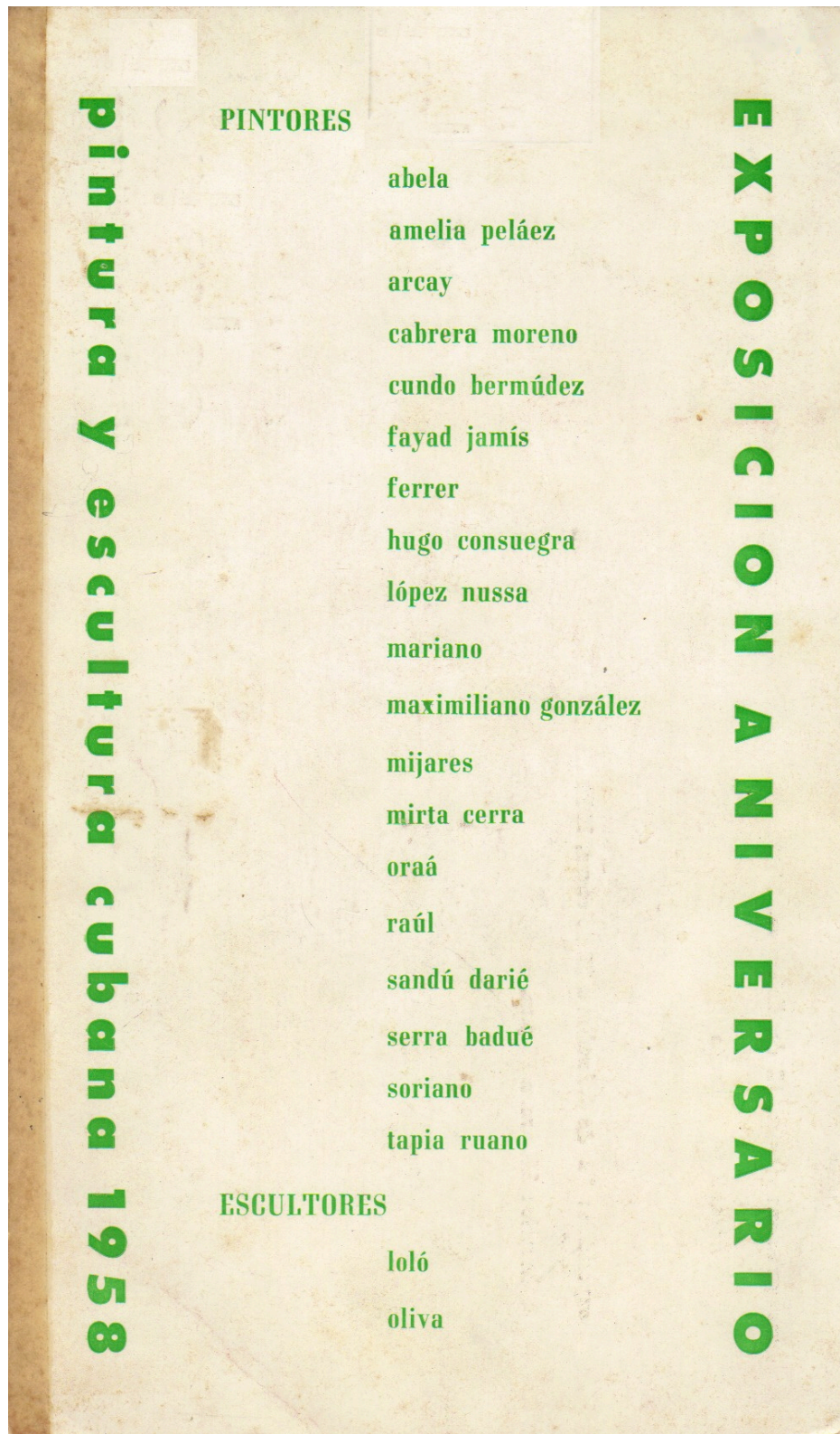


Image A. "Exposición aniversario. Pintura y escultura cubana 1958." Names, proportions, and marks on the copy are preserved.

Documentary note and references

The central source consists of the two reproductions supplied for this study, not a complete catalogue identifying the works. The analysis distinguishes printed evidence, the author's interpretation, and complementary context. References [2–4] document the cofounding and chronology; [5–6] support comparison across exhibitions; [7] provides an unverified lead concerning one work. No artworks or certificates have been physically examined. Names in the roster are retained as printed. Images have not been recreated, retouched, or stripped of their marks. The final source credit identifies the core archive without excluding the external references expressly cited.

[1] Galería de Arte Color Luz. Exposición aniversario. Pintura y escultura cubana 1958 (Anniversary Exhibition. Cuban Painting and Sculpture 1958). Two images supplied by Sarracino Gallery Archives: A, participant roster (Cub-1958-4.jpg); B, schedule, address, and logo (Cub-1958-4 2.jpg). Announced dates: December 12, 1958–January 12, 1959. Unpaginated; no inventory of works. A and B are editorial designations for this edition only.

[2] Caribbean Cultural Institute, Pérez Art Museum Miami. “Arquitectura de espacios cerrados” (The Architecture of Closed Spaces), English version. Context consulted: the 1957 cofounding, inaugural exhibition, and chronology of the Ten. Other interpretations advanced by the essay are not adopted here. [View source](#)

[3] Passerelle Centre d’Art Contemporain, Brest. Abstractions cubaines, des années 50 à nos jours (Cuban Abstractions, from the 1950s to the Present Day), October 14, 2022–January 14, 2023. Institutional account: Color-Luz’s cofounding in 1957 and formation of the Ten in 1959. [View source](#)

[4] David Zwirner. Concrete Cuba, press release for the London exhibition, September 5–October 3, 2015. Used only for its reference to the Ten’s exhibition and Color-Luz’s second anniversary in 1959. [View source](#)

[5] VI Salón Nacional de Pintura y Escultura (VI National Salon of Painting and Sculpture), National Capitol, Havana, January 1953. Catalogue supplied by Sarracino Gallery Archives, digital p. 4, Sculptors, nos. 24–26, Loló Soldevilla. Digital pagination does not necessarily match pages in the physical publication.

[6] VIII Salón Nacional de Pintura y Escultura (VIII National Salon of Painting and Sculpture), Instituto Nacional de Cultura, Palacio de Bellas Artes, Havana, 1956. Catalogue supplied by Sarracino Gallery Archives, digital p. 7, painting, nos. 201–202; digital p. 10, sculpture, nos. 69–70. The spelling “B-dimensional” is retained.

[7] Sotheby’s. Loló Soldevilla, Sin título (Untitled), lot 323, Thinking in Four Dimensions: Leading Women Sculptors, March 16, 2021. The exhibition history is consulted as a later assertion awaiting corroboration, not as independent authentication or conclusive evidence that the piece participated in 1958. [View source](#)

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Sources consulted: Sarracino Gallery Archives.

Web edition: images cropped and retouched to remove unrelated marks. References in the text to stamps and annotations describe the archival originals.