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Lola Mora in Tucumán: Personal Costs and Benefits of Creating Public Art, 1890-1904

*Lola Mora w Tucumán: Koszty i korzyści osobiste z tworzenia sztuki
publicznej, 1890-1904*

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Abstract: From a traditional perspective, women who have triumphed in the arts, literature, or science have been seen as an anomaly or “exceptional women” by historians. In 1895, only a third of girls under 14 could read in the small provincial town of Tucuman, in northern Argentina. However, Lola Mora displayed her sculptures in her first exhibitions in the same year. Her career as a sculptor was legitimized and recognized in her hometown Argentina, after spending years in Europe developing her talent. Her career as an artist has historically been seen as a distinct rarity, and few people have attempted to provide an explanation or contextualization for her success as an artist at the turn of the 20th century. In this article, I propose an analysis of the methods that Lola Mora used to legitimize her art and establish herself professionally. I would like to draw attention to Lola Mora’s conscious decision to contradict the contemporary ideals of patriotism and politics as themes in her art; her sculptures were physical manifestations of her feelings on the contentious aforementioned subjects. Lola Mora realigned her focus on the intricacies of provincial and national politics during the 1890s, but she did not abandon her art. Her career has been interpreted as a radical deviation from the lives that women conducted publicly in the 20th century.

Keywords: Argentina, Tucuman, Lola Mora, political art, patriotism.

Streszczenie: Z tradycyjnej perspektywy kobiety, które odniosły sukces w sztuce, literaturze, czy też na polu naukowym były postrzegane przez historyków jako „anomalie” lub „kobiety wyjątkowe”. W 1895 roku tylko jedna trzecia dziewcząt poniżej 14 roku życia umiała czytać w małym prowincjonalnym miasteczku Tucumán w północnej Argentynie. W tym samym roku Lola Mora wystawiała swoje rzeźby na pierwszych wystawach. Jej kariera rzeźbiarki została rozwinęła się w jej rodzinnym mieście Argentynie, po kilkuletnich studiach w Europie, gdzie jej talent się rozwinął. Jej kariera artystyczna była historycznie postrzegana jako ewenement;

niewiele osób próbowało wyjaśnić lub kontekstualizować jej sukces jako artystki przełomu XIX i XX wieku. W niniejszym artykule proponuję analizę metod, którymi Lola Mora legitymizowała swoją sztukę i ugruntowała swoją pozycję zawodową. Warto zwrócić uwagę, że Lola Mora świadomie kwestionowała ówczesne postrzeganie patriotyzmu; polityka była tematem jej twórczości; rzeźby Loli Mora były fizycznymi manifestacjami jej przekonań politycznych. W latach 90. XIX w. Lola Mora zaangażowana w politykę regionalną i narodową, nie porzuciła swojej sztuki, zaś jej twórczość została zinterpretowana jako radykalne kontestowanie tradycyjnej roli kobiety.

Słowa kluczowe: Argentyna, Tucumán, Lola Mora, sztuka polityczna, patriotyzm.

Introduction

“I also have the right to express my opinion as an artist” (*El Orden*, June 5th, 1904), Lola Mora stated flatly against a recommendation by the former Argentine president and renowned historian Bartolomé Mitre, about the position that the statue *La Libertad* should occupy in the main public square of the city of Tucumán. This closed a lively debate in which Mitre’s prestigious and masculine opinion was supposed to have the last word at a time when it was still several decades before a female voice was recognized as the authority to express opinions and define these kinds of issues. The anecdote is one of the many examples that demonstrate the firmness of convictions and the courage of the sculptor when defending her work.

The purpose of this article is to explore the beginnings of the sculptor Lola Mora¹ as a professional artist, focusing on the connections that she established with other figures of the period; and the strategies employed to legitimize her work within the normative context defined by the Civil Code, sanctioned in 1869 in Argentina, which have resulted in a serious setback for women, especially married women, in terms of public involvement (Antokoletz, 1943) The Civil Code equated women to minors, which meant, in legal terms, that they were not allowed to study, to become professionals, to trade, to testify, to dispose of their property, or form an association, among other prohibitions, without the authorization of a male adult (Barrancos, 2002).

¹ Among the several biographies written about Lola Mora we recommend Páez de la Torre & Terán, 1997; Rey Campero & José, 2013. Some fictionalized biographies have also been written (Félix, 1974; Santoro & Santoro, 1980). In recent years, research framed in women’s history and gender studies have also studied the figure of Lola Mora (Corsani, 2007; Vignoli, 2011; Gluzman, 2015).

Even though historiography has recovered a series of exceptional cases of women who may have challenged the boundaries of those norms, we postulate that it was not only a group of women who questioned the Civil Code with their doings, but that there were interstices that enabled a larger group of women to participate in the public sphere and therefore bridge the gap between the domestic and the public sphere. For instance, some women managed to take up spaces that men left vacant in the educational field, where a process of feminization is observed. It is also important to notice that legal regulation often left in the husband's hand the decision to allow or not his wife's participation in the public space.

Within this topic, we shall consider the strategies deployed by Lola Mora to legitimize her work; how she obtained validation for her work; how she turned it into an economic asset; the groups with which she partnered to succeed; and the reception of her work upon returning from Europe to a culturally and politically thriving Tucumán, which had started to present itself as a cultural hub of the northern Argentine region.

Our hypothesis postulates that Lola Mora's decision to adhere to a patriotic subject matter, which she expressed in a series of works that can be characterized as public art, eventually involved a series of both personal and political costs and benefits that fluctuated during the period under study.

The Configuration of a Cultural Environment in Tucuman at the End of the Century

Argentina's explosive economic and demographic growth at the end of the 19th century is well known. It entailed a process linked to the specialization of its fertile plains area into a region primarily dedicated to exporting wool, grains, and beef. Less well-known, however, is the fact that, concurrently with this phenomenon, more than one thousand kilometers away, in the vicinity of the Andean area, in the small and densely populated province of Tucumán, a remarkable economic expansion was also taking place.

This economic boom was centered around the production of sugar cane, which drew not only thousands of immigrants from neighboring provinces, but also a strong investment from other regions in the form of capital, technology, technicians, and skilled European labor.

The two main factors accounting for the success of Tucuman's producers, who monopolized the domestic sugar market in the first half of the 1890s, were the railway connection with the plains, dating back to 1876, and a tariff protection scheme in the face of foreign sugar competition. Local politicians also played a significant role in the modernization and consolidation of the national

government. Argentina had two Presidents who were originally from Tucumán: Nicolás Avellaneda (1874-1880) and Julio A. Roca (1880-1886 / 1898-1904), both outstanding figures in this process (Guy, 1981; Campi & Bravo, 2000).

Urban growth and the fact that society became more complex were inevitable consequences of the economic expansion, which turned the capital of Tucumán into the most important city and cultural hub of the region.

This expansion also encouraged the establishment of almost ninety different types of partnerships or associations that spread all along the province between 1880 and 1915. These associations can be grouped as follows: a) immigrants' associations; b) workers' associations and unions; and c) social centers and cultural centers, which aimed at patriotic or educational goals, and which had in some cases popular libraries and sports clubs (Kreibohm, 1960; Assaf, 2000; Vignoli, 2015). These new groups and spaces coexisted with the traditional elite clubs and the exclusive charitable organization *Sociedad de Beneficencia de Tucumán* (Charity Society of Tucuman), which since the 1850s gathered men and women who asserted their economic and social preeminence in the public sphere.²

During the second half of the 19th century, Tucumán's state government acquired modern features, which became evident in the province's increasing involvement in areas where it had not been present before. Even though there was still no area that could be defined as cultural - as separate from education - a trend towards the diversification of funds could be observed, as public funds were allocated to an emerging cultural sphere. For instance, during the early 1850s, the government's official budget revealed allowances allocated to musicians in official bands. Funds for civic and patriotic festivities also became available. The fine arts benefited as well, as funds were authorized for art classrooms and fully funded music and drawing academy was planned as an investment of vital importance for the education of young children in 1866.

Modernization was also perceived in the way in which professionals started to turn their attention to the city. That was the case of the renowned photographer Cristiano Junior, who in 1883 promoted his arrival to the city by stating that "the house established in Buenos Aires Street will be put to serve the public".³ He managed to capture, among others, a portrait of a young Lola Mora, who was then still a student.

² Since the mid-19th century, a women's charitable association complex was formed in Tucumán – and in the rest of the country – made up of a network of associations integrated, mostly, by elite women who were organized with the aim of carrying out actions to help the most dispossessed. On this issue we suggest consulting Gargiulo, 2013.

³ Archivo histórico de la Provincia de Tucumán (AHT from now on), *El Orden*, 03.04.1883. [Historical Archive of the Province of Tucumán].



Photography taken by Cristiano Junior in April 1883 - Archive CECAF

The different provincial administrations considered it important to support the Provincial Music Band (conductor and musicians' salaries, repair and purchase of instruments and costumes, and rental of premises). In addition, the investment was also extended to two music bands from the smaller towns Monteros and Concepción. These investments were complemented by the creation of music schools, such as the Alberdi Conservatory, created in 1903, and Mozart Conservatory, which opened in 1906. There were also subsidies to libraries in the city of Tucumán (*Sarmiento, Amigos de la Educación, Alberdi, Círculo del Magisterio*) as well as in the smaller towns; such was the case of the *Biblioteca Mitre* in Monteros. Because of the most recognized figures in the art world, and the investments in culture from official budgets, there was not only a considerable segment devoted to these jobs, but also businesses that were installed to supply them. The 1895 national census recorded a population of 215,742 in Tucumán. Among the professionals related to the culture, there was a majority of musicians—a total of ninety-eight—, followed by thirteen artists and seven photographers. Only four female artists were recorded that year (Segundo Censo de la República Argentina, 1898).

The 1914 national census shows that, in a total population of 332,933, those professions had doubled, and new cultural-related activities began to diversify, for example, there were music and drawing teachers (Tercer Censo de la República Argentina, 1914). The 1913 municipal census complements these data with detailed information about the businesses and “capital city industries”. There were three painting studios, one sculpting studio, and one framing studio. In addition, there were six photography shops, and eleven print shops in the city of Tucumán (Rodríguez Marquina, 1913).

At the turn of the century, art exhibitions were commonplace in Buenos Aires. Georgina Gluzman has specifically studied the ones taking place in *El Ateneo*, which gathered around eighty female artists. Far from considering these practices “...an ornaments exhibition” (Gluzman, 2016: 83), the author challenged the vision regarding the art expertise of those taking part in the exhibitions and considered that “The quality of their work, their eagerness to be exhibited in a sustained way, the possession of their own workspace and their solid artistic training, are evidence of their desire to be seen as women strongly committed to the development of art in Buenos Aires” (Gluzman, 2016: 83).

A similar milieu, though different in scale, began to take form in Tucumán around foreign art teachers who arrived in the province in the late 19th century, among which the Italian artist Santiago Falcucci⁴ stood out. There were also several fund-raising art exhibitions organized by charity institutions. Lola Mora, then a student in the Falcucci studio, assiduously participated in these artistic events.⁵

⁴ Santiago Falcucci was Italian painter based in Tucumán around 1887 where, in addition to the classes that he taught in his workshop, also worked as a teacher at the National College and the Normal School. Furthermore, he gave lectures at the Provincial Academy of Fine Arts, that was created at the beginning of the 20th century by the provincial government.

⁵ We disagree with Georgina Gluzman who stated that Lola Mora never took part in exhibitions, unlike other artists of her time (82). In general, except for the biography written by Carlos Páez de la Torre and Celia Terán (1997), there is scant knowledge of the social, cultural, and artistic contexts that surrounded Mora during the first thirty years of her life. As we suggest in another work, there is also very little information about the ties that Mora established with other artists of the time and the strategies that allowed her to obtain a grant to further develop her artistic skills in Europe (Vignoli, 2011). Mora’s life is much less glamorous than what the biographies have constructed, many of which are fictionalized accounts (Santoro and Santoro, 1980). The nonexistence of a personal archive from Lola Mora contributes to the difficulty of reconstructing her biography; however, the historical reconstruction of her life is not completely impossible, since it can be done through research in general archives. Patricia Viviana Corsani, for instance, carried out a reconstruction of the debates around Mora’s Nereids Fountain (1903) using periodicals published in Buenos Aires, as well as official documents, as sources (Corsani, 2007). It is also possible to locate historical documents related to lesser-known periods of Mora’s life, such as the years when she worked for the government of Jujuy. A vast documentary corpus can be found in the provincial historic archive of Jujuy (Rey Campero & José, 2013).

The charitable organization *Sociedad de Beneficencia de Tucumán* oversaw the organization of *kermesses* (festivals), or other fund-raising events, to celebrate the fourth centenary of the conquest of America. As it was customary, these events were associated with raising funds for the poor in the province. For the 1892 event, an exhibition that called on the young ladies who were refining their skills with master Falcucci was organized. Apparently, all the works submitted by the Italian instructor were accepted except for one piece by Lola Mora, because the charitable organization considered that her surname “was not in harmony” with those of the other artists. Falcucci, however, was determined to have her work accepted, and threatened to withdraw all his other students’ works unless Mora’s work was exhibited. His threat made the women who led the fund-raising event reconsider their position.⁶

Two years later, on July 9, 1894, as part of the commemorations of Argentina’s Independence Day,⁷ the ladies from the same charitable institution held another *kermesse* at the *Escuela Normal de Maestras*, a teacher training secondary school, where Lola Mora exhibited a unique series of portraits depicting twenty different governors of Tucumán (currently known as *La Galería de los Gobernadores de Tucumán*).

The portraits were made on Canson paper, with charcoal pencils; erasers and blending stumps were used to define the light effects and contrasts, and to remove some of the rigidity of the faces, which, in most cases, had been taken from photographs (Terán, 2009: 315). Not only were there no objections to Mora’s participation this time, but the exhibition was also reviewed by the magazine *El Tucumán Literario*, which highlighted the drawing salon:

[...] We would like to make a special mention of the room that held the original paintings, due to the pencil or brush of distinguished adherents to the beautiful art of painting and drawing, which once again demonstrated the talent and good taste of Tucuman girls [...].⁸

⁶ A controversy among the different authors who have studied the artist’s life still surrounds this event. The only existing reference to that episode is the testimony of Falcucci himself, who narrated the event a decade later. Those who do not accept his account consider that the absence of other evidence, compounded with the timing of his accusation—which coincides with Mora’s success in Tucumán—make Falcucci’s version of the facts questionable. It is also likely that an association that gathered Tucumán’s female elite, such as the *Sociedad de Beneficencia*, wished to prioritize in its exhibition the works of the young ladies who belonged to upper-class families (Falcucci, 2004). Planning these events granted visibility to the charitable organization as a group and constituted an opportunity for featured female artists to achieve some notoriety in Tucumán.

⁷ On July 9, a Congress met in the city of San Miguel de Tucumán to declare the independence of the United Provinces of South America, a date that was later instituted as Argentine Independence.

⁸ Hemeroteca de la Facultad de Filosofía y Letras (hereafter HFFyL), *El Tucumán Literario*, 22.07.1894.

The artistic zeitgeist of Tucumán at the turn of the century could also be ascertained by means of a personal album written by Cornelia Montero⁹ between 1898 and 1901, a teacher who was interested in art, philosophy, history, and literature; and who also worked as an assistant in the chemistry laboratory of the renowned naturalist Miguel Lillo.

Montero's album contains texts inspired by art exhibitions, which she called "critical opinions", and often includes reflections on the discipline of history. In addition, Montero's album features collaborations by other men and women associated with teaching, literature, and science in Tucumán.¹⁰ It is, thus, a valuable source that offers insight into the informal networks of the time, in other words, into relevant relationships established outside the spheres of associations or educational institutions. Following historian Natalie Zemon Davis, we can think of Cornelia Montero as situated at a liminal position in that cultural environment which, in its institutionalized face, boasted an almost exclusively male environment (literary magazines' writers, and members of cultural associations and popular libraries were mostly men). As Zemon Davis points out, however, on certain occasions, some women were able to "adopt a marginal place and rebuild themselves as a locally defined center" (Zemon Davis, 1999).

Montero's area of expertise was art, and on this topic, she wrote a long review after visiting the Fine Arts exhibition organized in 1899 by the *Sociedad San Vicente de Paul*, which she defined as a "real social-artistic event". She anticipated that her critique was fair, "I shall judge these works regardless of the author's name or social condition". She began by referring to pictorial works done by the male artists participating in the exhibition. Except for a portrait made by a "master hand; master, as well, of most of the composers, who should not have been in the midst of the works of his disciples" (Montero, n.d.), she did not find works of much interest in this sector. After referring to some pieces created by male artists, she commented on works by women. According to Montero, "the exhibitors in this honorable art contest take the lead over the stronger sex, as they win in good taste, elegance, arguments, execution, and colors." (Montero, n.d.)¹¹

⁹ Cornelia Montero became secretary of the *Escuela Normal de Maestras* (Normal Teachers' School) before working as history and geography teacher at the same institution in 1900. A few years later, along with a group of women, she became a member of the *Sociedad Sarmiento* (Sarmiento Society), and in 1905 joined the membership of the *Círculo del Magisterio* (Teachers' Circle).

¹⁰ It is important to mention that Cornelia Montero's album was transferred by the Leme family to the *Laboratorio de Digitalización del ISES* (ISES Digitalization Laboratory. (LADI from now on). Cornelia Montero, *Álbum*, 1898-1901, Tucumán.

¹¹ LADI, Cornelia Montero, *Álbum*, 7/1899, n.d.

Montero's analysis of approximately twelve works from male and female artists enables us to speculate that this was a stimulating cultural environment in which men and women alike participated. However, there were some outstanding contributions, in which she saw "a superior intelligence, a limitless disposition for arts, demonstrated by their extremely varied watercolors..."¹² (Montero, n.d.).

Going back to the context of the 1894 exhibition, in which Lola Mora presented her *Galería de los Gobernadores*, it is relevant to refer to Celia Terán's analysis of Mora's series. Terán compares Mora's work with that of her fellow art studio attendees in the following way: "in this case, instead of the landscapes, or romantic scenes that constituted the argument of the paintings presented by the other girls at charity exhibition, Lola had chosen a more laborious and committed subject." (Terán, 2008: 315).

It is remarkable that, from that moment onwards, Lola Mora's works follow a patriotic theme which she further developed and mastered—and even carried onto sculpture—later on. This not only granted her works notoriety and high praise compared with those made by her fellow art students, but also aligned her with the state's determination to spread patriotic sentiment among the population.

Historiography has highlighted the works of patriotic exaltation which, in classrooms, associations of various kinds, and through artistic-cultural manifestations, some young people took on during the last quarter of the nineteenth century in Argentina (Bertoni, 2001; González Bernaldo, 2001; Sábato, 2004; Vignoli, 2015). These concerns were articulated with the State purpose to extend and promote identity values to a society that received many immigrants. The issue of patriotism became a sensitive topic during this period. For example, the relevant magazine, *El Monitor de la Educación* (The Monitor of Education), published in 1910 William Morris's meditations on patriotism, which was later sent as a pamphlet to all public libraries in the country. Furthermore, the politician and intellectual Ricardo Rojas proposed in *La Restauración Nacionalista* (The Nationalist Restoration), published in 1909, that in the context of massive immigration, education was the tool to instill patriotic values in the population.

Therefore, it is not surprising that Lola Mora sought, in her work, to identify with that feeling of patriotic fervor that was pursued both by the state and the civil society to cement civic values in the population. Mora understood that this quest would materialize in the national state and provincial administrations' willingness to acquire works of art in spite of their elevated cost, or the complications of their location.

¹² LADI, Cornelia Montero, *Album*, 7/1899, n.d.

Connections with provincial and national political power: Mora's specialization grant

A set of artworks produced for the exhibition in 1894 was donated by Lola Mora to the provincial government, accompanied by a note in which she stated: "I wish to associate in some way with the noble expanses of patriotism on this immortal day in our history." (Páez de la Torre & Terán, 1997: 32).

In October of the same year, congressman Eudoro Vázquez introduced a bill in Tucumán's legislative branch in which he proposed to award Lola Mora the sum of ten thousand pesos as "a reward for merit and artistic work..." Vázquez supported his request by stating that "It is necessary to stimulate work, and even more so when it is that of a *señorita* who has carried it out through continuous work and great sacrifices." (Páez de la Torre an& Terán, 1997: 32).

The final amount agreed upon was five thousand pesos. In order to legitimize her work and make it profitable, Lola Mora blended her talent as an artist and her ability to appeal to the public. At the end of the 19th century, these strategies constituted a widespread practice among members of the middle class who attempted to consolidate themselves professionally and achieve some form of prestige and stability. This was true particularly among artists who worked in provinces that were far from Buenos Aires; for them, it was essential to engage in communications with the state. However, it was not common practice among women artists to do so. This fact was made evident when Lola Mora applied for and obtained a subsidy from the National Congress to continue her studies in Europe, only to later have this decision questioned by the Senate. One of the reasons Mora was awarded this grant was her previous recognition by the Tucumán legislature. Mora's qualifications, supported by experts, justified the chamber's decision to draft a bill to grant the artist a monthly subsidy, for the period of two years in Europe.¹³

However, when the Senate reviewed its decision, objections arose. The Senate questioned whether Lola Mora had enough merit to study in Europe, and it was suggested that she should, instead, receive a grant to study in the Fine Arts School of Buenos Aires. To defend Mora's short but fruitful career, congressmen Domingo T. Pérez and Francisco L. García (representing Jujuy and Tucumán, respectively) argued that the artist had already done her preparatory studies and had, in fact, specialized in painting. Pérez and García referred to the governors' series (*Galería de los Gobernadores*), exhibited in 1894. The bill was passed in October 1896.¹⁴

¹³ Congreso Nacional, 1895: 266.

¹⁴ Congreso Nacional, 1896: 500-501.

Once settled in Italy, Mora found the support of the Argentine ambassador in Rome, Dr. Enrique B. Moreno, who provided recommendations and introduced her to the artistic and high society circles of the city. The ambassador's brother, Hilarión Moreno, introduced Mora to Francesco Paolo Michetti, one of the most acclaimed painters of the Italian realist school. Michetti agreed to give Mora private lessons in the studio that he shared with the sculptor Constantino Barbella. Mora then began taking modeling classes with Barbella as well, and she met other sculptors. Influenced by one, Giulio Monteverde, Mora became increasingly more interested in sculpture and, as a result, completely abandoned painting. As the subsidy granted by the government was due to expire at the end of 1898, ambassador Moreno requested the renewal of the subsidy by highlighting the artist's remarkable progress in Italy.

The appeal was successful, and, by middle 1899, a presidential decree was issued granting her a monthly subsidy of 200 pesos for one year. It was clarified that the length of the scholarship would be shortened because, since November 1897, there was another decree establishing new conditions under which grants should be awarded: a prior competition with four Argentine juries for sculpture had to be held.

This period proved to be fruitful for Lola Mora, not only in terms of her artistic training, but also in her expanded network of useful contacts which contributed to her public recognition, and significantly increased the commercial success of her works. During that time, Mora rigorously sent to Buenos Aires and Tucumán news clips of her appearances in the Italian press. The prestige she obtained in Europe, publicized throughout the Argentine press, helped Mora to make a name for herself in her own country. As a result, Mora was commissioned by the Tucumán government to create a sculpture in honor of Argentine politician Juan Bautista Alberdi.

The Installation of the statue of Juan Bautista Alberdi¹⁵

The provincial government appointed the *Sociedad Sarmiento* (Sarmiento Society) to be responsible for the arrangements to carry out the installation of the statue of Juan Bautista Alberdi. To that end, the *Comisión del Monumento a Alberdi* (Alberdi Monument Committee) was established in 1901. Lola Mora was contacted, and then a contract, which included the characteristics of the

¹⁵ Juan Bautista Alberdi was born in Tucumán in August 1810. He stood out as a lawyer, jurist, economist, politician, statesman, diplomat, deputy, writer, and Argentine musician. He was the intellectual actor responsible for the Argentine Constitution of 1853.

sculpture, was agreed upon and signed. Approximately two days later, Governor Prospero Mena passed a decree which read:

[...] Pay the first 5,000 pesos agreed to be delivered when the work begins. The rest would be paid at the rate of 1,000 pesos once the model has been made in plaster to be transferred into marble; 10,000 pesos when it was finished, and a final payment of 5,000 pesos for the packaging; agreeing Miss Mora to move to this city and direct her work. (Páez de la Torre & Terán, 1997: 64)

As the sculptor's arrival in Tucumán approached, the public grew progressively curious. Besides the statue of Alberdi, which would be installed in the homonymous square, several other pieces by Mora were also scheduled to be installed, including the Statue of Liberty in the central *Plaza Independencia*, and two bas-relief sculptures in *Casa de la Independencia* (Historical House of Tucumán). In this context, a campaign titled "Pro-Lola Mora" began. This campaign was set to pay homage to the artist by raising funds to purchase a gold and diamond medal to be gifted to Mora, as well as an album with original signatures by prestigious members of the society. The campaign was successful and received the support of prestigious, predominantly male, social circles, including the *Club Social*, the cafés *Confitería del Águila*, *Colón*, and *Confitería de París*, as well as the *Alberdi* Library. The campaign also received endorsement from various local businesses and numerous individuals, which underlined the consensus and respectability that the *Sociedad Sarmiento* had achieved in the public sphere.

Lola Mora arrived in Tucumán in mid-June 1904 to manage the installation of her works, which was rather complicated. The first incident took place when it was decided to place the Statue of Liberty at the Independencia square, a site chosen by Mora herself. Another monument was already placed in the same square: a statue of politician and military leader Manuel Belgrano, one of the main figures in the Argentine War of Independence. The government's final resolution to relocate Belgrano's statue, in 1904, led to controversy and publications in the press to discredit the provincial government, as one can see in some articles of the newspaper *El Orden*.

The inauguration of Mora's works, at first set to take place on July 9, was delayed until September. Taking advantage of the delay, which was more due to technical issues than to government decisions, the newspaper *El Orden* intensified his attacks on the government and revealed that it still owed the sculptor 9,000 pesos.

These rumors brought about a surge of articles published in several newspapers, such as *El Diario*, from Buenos Aires; and *La Provincia* and *El Orden*, from Tucumán, all of which forced the artist to make public statements. "It angers me to be the object of arguments," said Mora, "and I deeply regret that someone

might consider that I complain about the government”¹⁶ (*El Orden*, 1904). Mora also explained how the payments previously agreed upon had been made and offered a detailed report of the expenses incurred in the purchase of the marble and other materials needed for her work. It is clear from Mora’s words that the provincial government had been unable to make the payment promised by the previous governor, Prospero Mena. We can also observe that the artist was fully aware of the real cost of materials, as well as of the art market in Argentina.¹⁷

The inauguration finally took place on September 24, 1904. The celebrations lasted four days, from September 23rd to 26th. Besides the traditional procession of the *Virgen de la Merced*, and the inauguration of Lola Mora’s works, the *Sociedad de Beneficencia* organized a *kermess*. The *Sociedad Sarmiento* also paid homage to Lola Mora, event at which Juan Bautista Terán made a speech referring to the significance of the installation of artworks for the people of Tucumán:

[...] Tucuman, a populous and commercial city which begins to enjoy the emotions of modern life, completes its exterior appearance, and gives credit to its spiritual progress by raising with love and joy the white statues that will captivate the travelers’ eyes; signaling the presence of a town that no longer lives on bread, a town which, being feverishly industrial, with its demographic characteristics like no other city in Latin America, understands the mission of art. ... You reveal a new Tucuman, which takes pride in you as an artist, because you give the unexpected and bewildering delight of artistic pleasure which had appeared before. You bring the spirit of a new life that encourages an intelligent industry, its progressive libraries, its scientific conferences, its group of thinkers, its populous, generous, and peaceful soul [...].¹⁸

When Terán spoke at the *Sociedad Sarmiento*, he was still a twenty-four-year-old lawyer. His speech anticipates his main arguments in favor of the arts, which would appear later, in the first decade of the 20th century in the pages of magazines such as *Revista de Letras y Ciencias Sociales*, or in his speeches delivered from his seat in Congress. One of the beliefs underlying his thinking was the idea of Tucumán as the center of a vast region, insofar as the province held a prosperous industry and a growingly stimulating cultural environment that deemed obligatory the creation of a center of high-level studies and research, a university. One that would be capable of responding to the interests of not only the people of Tucuman, but also of all the northern provinces, which had similar intellectual concerns and material needs.

It was in this political and intellectual environment that Lola Mora was able to establish herself as a respected artist in her own province. An environment

¹⁶ AHT, *El Orden*, 15.09.1904.

¹⁷ *El Orden*, 15.09.1904.

¹⁸ AHT, *El Orden*, 28.09.1904.

filled with tensions typical of the liberal ideology, female inclusion-exclusion that provided a new framework for some women to develop their talent, professions, or inclinations. Mora's presence in Tucumán's cultural scene highlighted her talent as a woman artist and opened the doors for other women to develop their artistic talents and pursue their professional interests.

Conclusion

During the first years of her career, Argentine artist Lola Mora challenged the customs and regulations of her time, which restricted women's participation in the public sphere. Women were discouraged from trading, studying, or becoming professionals. To be allowed to perform any of these activities, they were required to obtain authorization from an adult male. It was in this cultural climate that some women, like Mora, started to participate in painting workshops, art exhibitions, and cultural associations.

Mora's topic selection was also a novelty at the end of the nineteenth century. Her concerns moved away from the motives often depicted by her fellow women artists. In addition, following a patriotic pattern allowed Mora to profit from her art. This can be seen not only in the unprecedented investment made by the province of Tucumán to commission her works, but also in the sponsorship of her professionalization in Europe. As time went by, Lola Mora could better understand the costs and benefits of her decision to follow a patriotic pattern. She revealed herself as a talented sculptor, with works focused on the public sphere, and served as a model to future generations of women artists.

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Nota o Autorce

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