Cuba, Where Art Speaks Louder Than Words

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Summary

This poster examines 19th-century images from Cuban history. These powerful visual representations offer insight into how culture, demographics, power dynamics, and the economy were portrayed and understood in 19th-century Cuba.

Frédéric Mialhe

An important French artist who created the "two-face" lithographic art pieces presenting life in Cuba during the 19th century. The two-face meaning in these art pieces was meant to represent how enticing it was for the Europeans to be able to come to Cuba and get richer through industrial means, meanwhile, the art demonstrated the lives of the native people.

Churchs – Lawfully Unlawful

Vista de la Catedral de Cuba (1841 -1842) (Sight of the Catedral in Cuba)_was painted by Frédéric Mialhe in 1841. The Church within the painting represents an oxymoron of what is happening in Cuba. The Cubans believe in God who supports the equality of his people, yet there is no equality in Cuba. There is a difference in the classes of people presented where the rich wear luxurious clothing with top hats while the poor wear more casual clothing. Additionally, the race of people determined their place within the city the Españoles or Criollos vs Africans.

Havana Bay

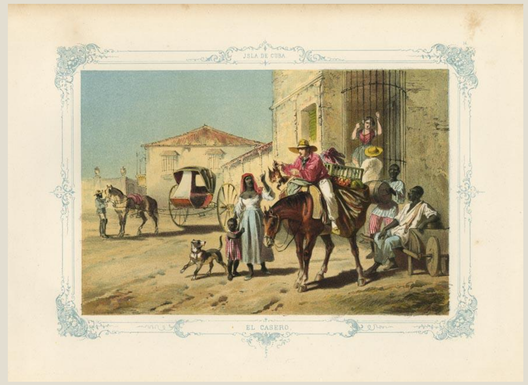
This representation of Havana Bay highlights the prosperity of life around the port. Both Cuban and Spanish authorities took pride in Havana's significance since the 16th century as a key hub for transporting goods from the Americas to Spain.

What do you notice first?

Conclusion

Cuba has undergone significant transformations, and its history must not be forgotten. Through its artwork, we gain insight into the country's past and its lasting connection to the present. From the shifting demographics and political structures to the ways in which art was used by the upper classes to shape the image of the city and the colony, these visual records offer a powerful window into Cuba's complex heritage.

Social Control and Slavery



Both images illustrate the structure of the colonial social hierarchy and the institutions designed to enforce it—most notably, the newly constructed 'Nueva Cárcel' prison, which was intended to project an image of order and civility to European observers and visitors to the island.

References

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