'They Still Draw Pictures'- Children's Art from the Spanish Civil War

Exhibit: March 19-May 30, 2008

Opening Reception, Wednesday, March 19, 5:30 p.m.
Drew University is hosting a traveling exhibit of historic children's drawings, and war-time photographs by Robert Capa in, “They Still Draw Pictures: Children's Art from the Spanish Civil War.” The artwork details the trauma of war as seen through the lens of the reality of children who experienced war and, in particular, the civil war that was fought unsuccessfully to protect the elected Republic from falling into the hands of Fascists in Spain (1936-39). This fierce conflict resulted in the rise to power of one of the major dictators in Europe, Francisco Franco.

The cruel nature of civil war was compounded in the Iberian conflict by the presence of foreign fighters on both sides. The war in Spain was the first conflict in which aerial bombing of civilian targets was deliberately pursued. Many of the children who drew these pictures were refugees of bombing raids by the German Luftwaffe’s Condor Legion.

The Spanish Republic, the democratically elected and legitimate government of Spain, removed some 200,000 children from the front lines and relocated them away from the fighting. Some were placed in “Colonias Infantiles,” or children’s colonies, where they were encouraged to draw as a form of art therapy, to help them cope with the brutality they had witnessed and separation from family.

The exhibit is based on “They Still Draw Pictures: Children’s Art in Wartime,” curated by Anthony L. Geist and Peter N. Carroll for the Abraham Lincoln Brigade Archives, Inc. of New York. The original Spanish Civil War materials are owned by the Avery Library of Columbia University and the Abraham Lincoln Brigade Archives.

“They Still Draw Pictures” was made possible at Drew with support from Office of the Dean of the College, the Spanish Department, the European Studies Program, and the University Library. Professor of Spanish Mónica Cantero, who coordinated the effort to bring the exhibit to Drew, commented that “The material of this exhibition is a component of this spring’s Senior Seminar on Contemporary Filmic Discourse. The portrayal of Spain during the Spanish Civil War is a dominant theme in contemporary Spanish film, where the memories are still very strong. I am very happy to have the opportunity to bring the exhibit to Drew, where students can view first-hand both the historic photographs and gain a sense of the war-time experience from the unusual perspective of the children’s artwork.”

The exhibit was on view in the Library Gallery from March 19-May 30, 2008, an opening reception held Wednesday,