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Chest of Drawers (cómoda)

Cindy Perdomo

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Chest of Drawers (cómoda)

Cindy Perdomo

Museum of Fine Arts Boston

Collection: Americas

Date: 1750-1800

Object Place: Cuba

Medium: Mahogany, cedar, silver hardware

Inscriptions: Painted on the underside of the front

bottom rail in script: “de las comodas”



Chest of drawers, (2021). MFA Museum of Fine Arts Boston

Introduction

When was the object made?

1750–1800

Late Baroque

How are the parts composed?

Line: Horizontal and vertical datum line

Shape: Organic cube

Form: Smooth mahogany box

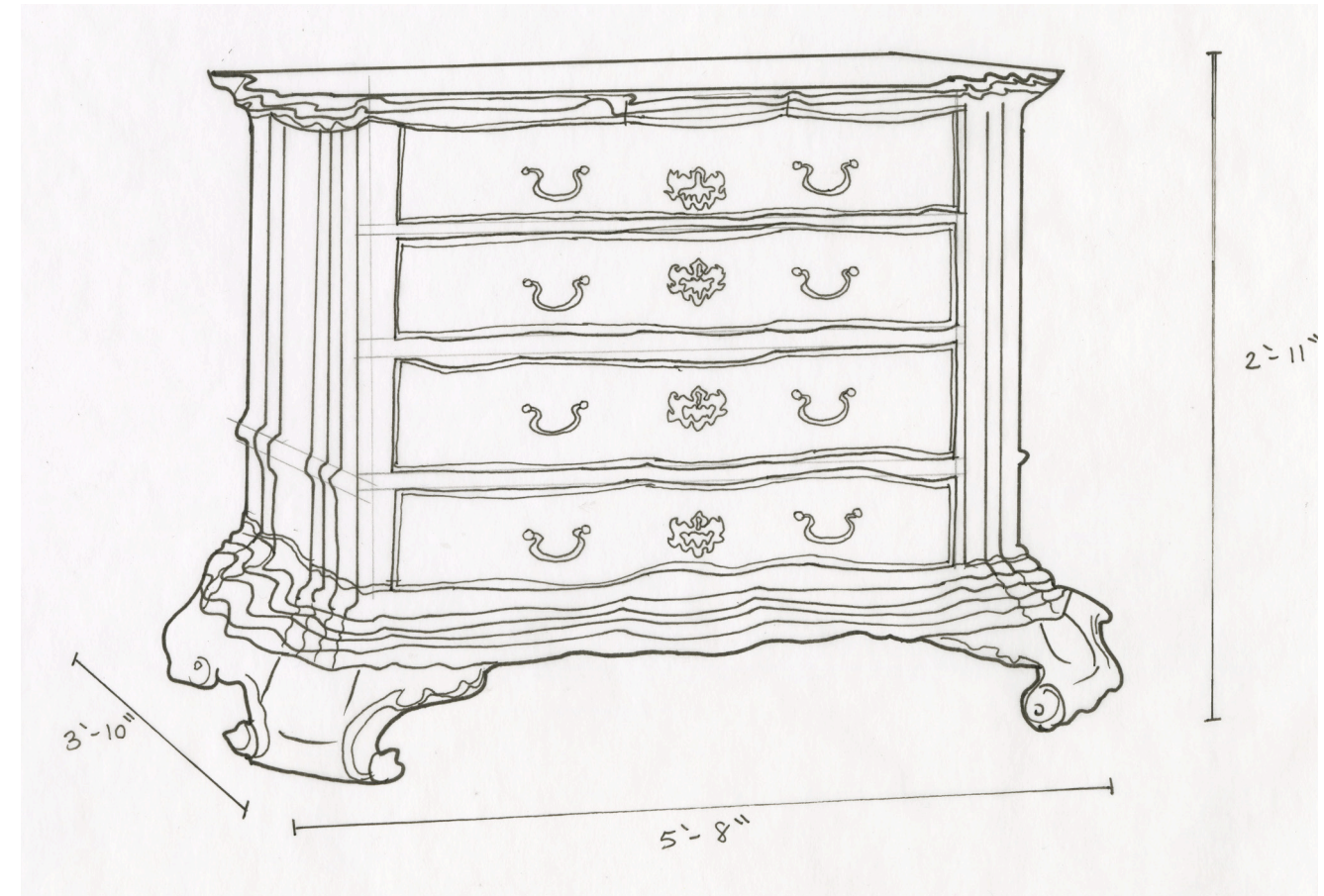
Balance: Vertical symmetrical design

Movement: Serpentine lines

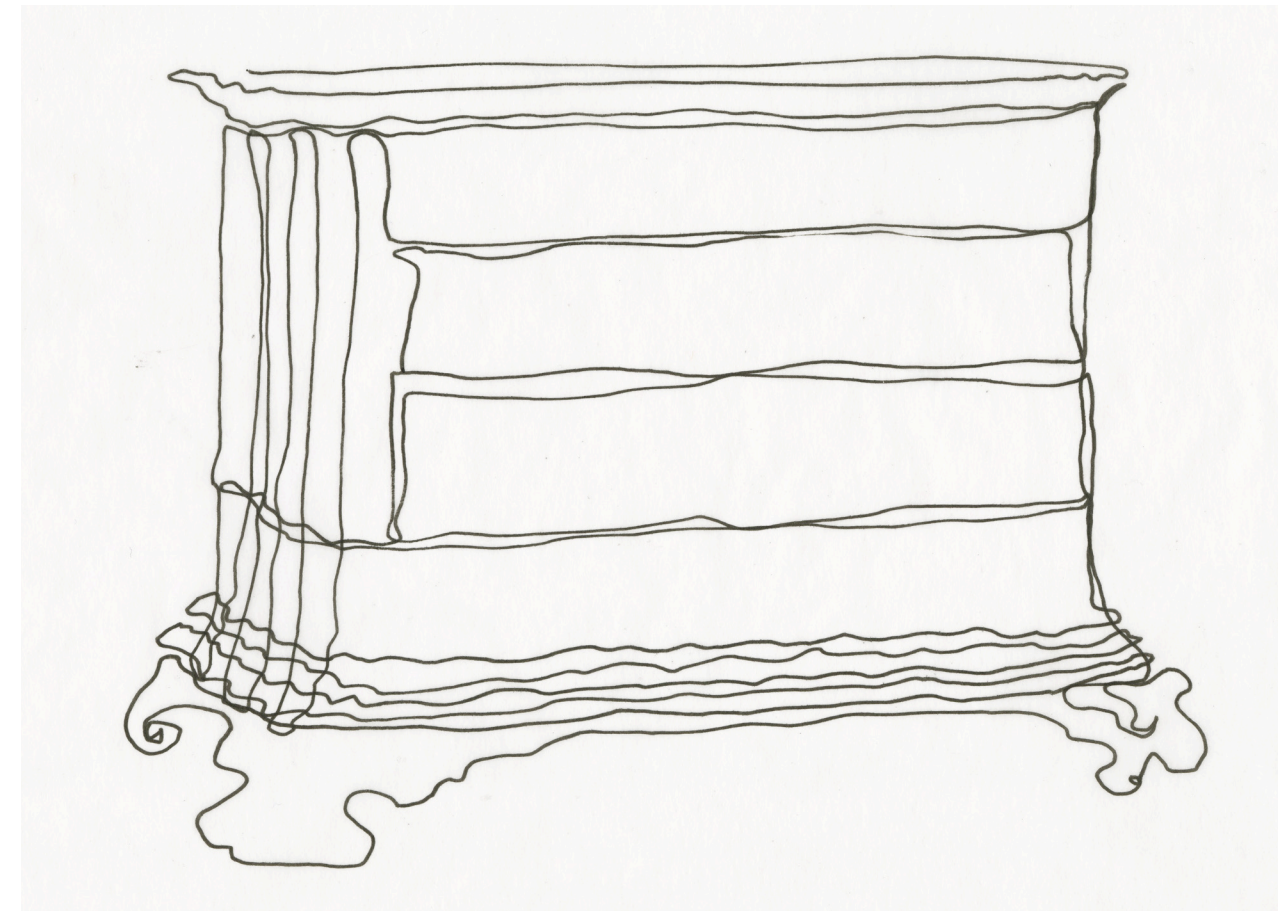
Pattern: Silver handles

Repetition: Silver motif

Unity: Material



Chest of drawers, sketch (2021) perdomo



Chest of drawers, sketch (2021) perdomo

Sacristy Chest (cómodas de sacris- tía)

The sacristy chest originated in
fifteenth century Spain.

They are located inside the Catholic
church.

The sacristy room is located on the
side of the main altar.

These chests were often built into the
walls of the sacristy room.

They are used for storing priests'
vestments.



Sacristy of the Cathedral of Faro, Portugal, (2017). dreamstime



Chest of drawers, (2021). MFA Museum of Fine Arts Boston

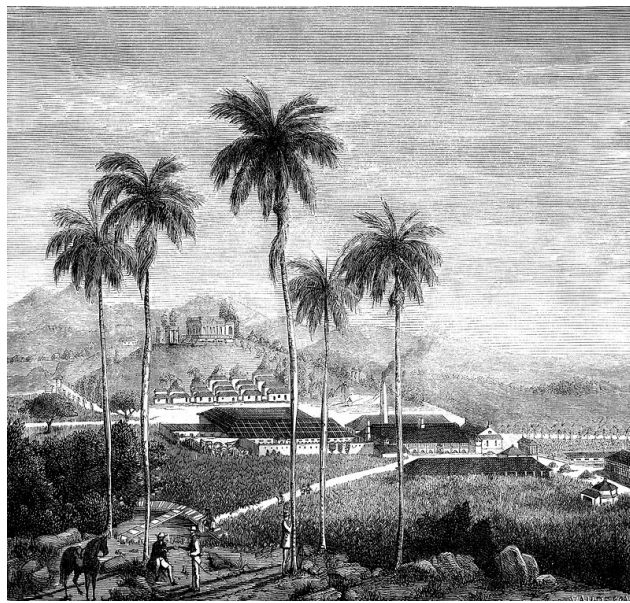
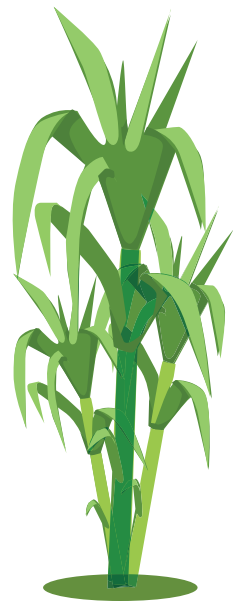


Place



Idealized pictorial scene of the first landing of Christopher Columbus in what was to be America. (2021). elpais

Cuba is the largest single island of the archipelago. In 1492 Christopher Columbus claimed Cuba for Spain. There is estimated to have been more than three million Tainos living on Hispaniola. By 1550 Tainos were nearly under extinction.



19th Century sugar cane plantation, Cuba,(2121). science photo library

Time

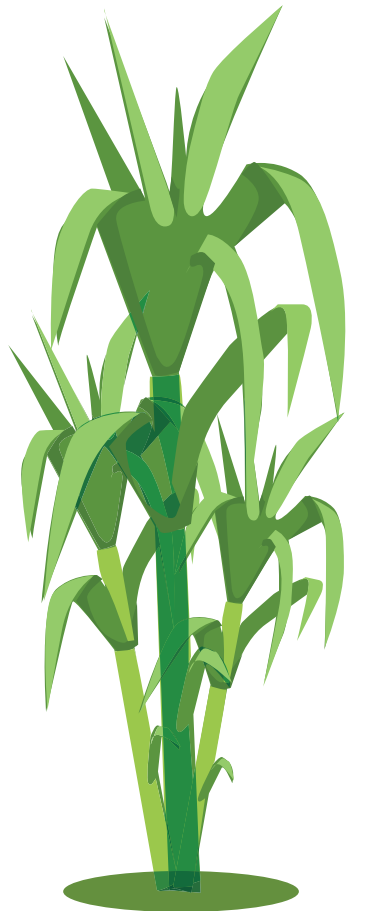
The period from 1750 to 1850 forms a major turning point in the social, economic and political evolution of Cuba.

Spain opened Cuba's ports up to foreign ships, and a great sugar boom began that lasted until the 1880s.

To the Spanish and other Europeans who crossed the Atlantic Ocean, the Indies represented the "New Frontier" of opportunity.



18th Century Sugar Cane Plantations, (2012). leahmariebrownhistoricals



View of a Tobacco Plantation, (1851). slaveryimages



Plaza de la Catedral, Havana, (2021). Pinterest

People and Culture

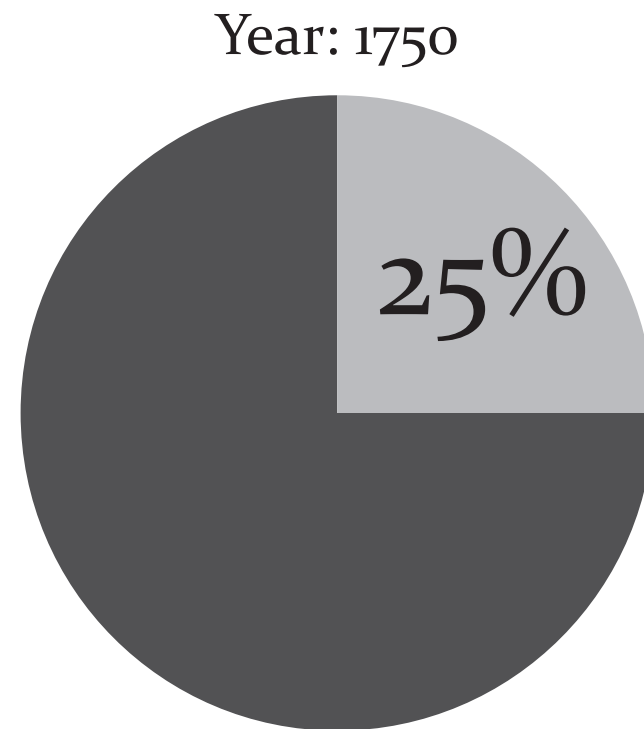
During the 1750's the population of Cuba approximated 160,000 people.
25% of the population were slaves.

Cuba had suddenly gained attention as a locale for economic opportunity for many Spanish and non-spanish emigrants to seek their fortunes.

In 1689 the College of San Ambrosio was founded in Havana for the purpose of preparing young men for the priesthood.



The Inauguration of El Templete, (1828).journals.openedition



Population: 160,000

Tools and Materials

Mahogany grows only in fairly specific climate zones, which includes the West Indies.

Color tends to darken with age.

The MFA's chest was made in two parts, for easier movement in a household or for shipping. compared to a typical New England chest, it is oversized.

This chest was made by a local craftsman in cuba with tools like the handplaner and chisel.



Slaves felling mahogany trees, (2014). theislandwiki



Wooden Planer, (1800). pinterest



Chisel Wooden Handle, (1800). Ebay



Detail, Cuban Mahogany Sacristy Chests, (2021). bonhams

Design process and characteristics

The French and English trade with Cuba influenced Cuban furniture during the eighteenth century.

Cuba was influenced by the Spanish plateresque style which was influenced by the French baroque.

During the British occupation in 1741 Havanas residents had the ability to purchase consumer goods from British merchants.



Chest of drawers, (2021). MFA Museum of Fine Arts Boston

Use or role within the interior

The sacristy room holds the vestments and sacred objects used in the services.

In Cuba, the elites would commission cabinet makers from the island to create a smaller sacristy chest for their private chapels and urban mansions. These extravagant chests would mimicke the grand ostentatious pieces of the future built into the church's walls.



Church



Home



St Patrick's Cathedral, New York City, (2021). anewimmaculata



Museo Casa de Diego Velázquez, (2020). tripadvisor

Effects of colonialism

Without colonialism this chest would have not been displayed in the MFA in Boston.

Catholicism would have never been forced upon the native peoples of cuba.

The island's population and language would not be what it is today.

A version of this would be seen in Europe but not in Mahogany.



18th Century Baroque Chest
Denmark(2021). 1stdibs



Queen Anne Block Font Chest of Drawers,
(2016). Christie's



Comoda de sacristia, (2014) artstor

Analysis realization and reflections

The population of the New World is a product of rape and genocide.

Cuba would have not prospered without the forced labor of the African people.

This chest represents wealth, power, and the religion of the time.



A room in the Museo de la Ciudad de La Habana, (2004). The eighteenth-century



Dennis Carr with Cuban chest of drawers, (2014).
Photograph Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

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