





KILLING TIME

an exhibition of Cuban artists from the 1980s to the present

Curators Elvis Fuentes, Glexis Novoa, Yuneikys Villalonga

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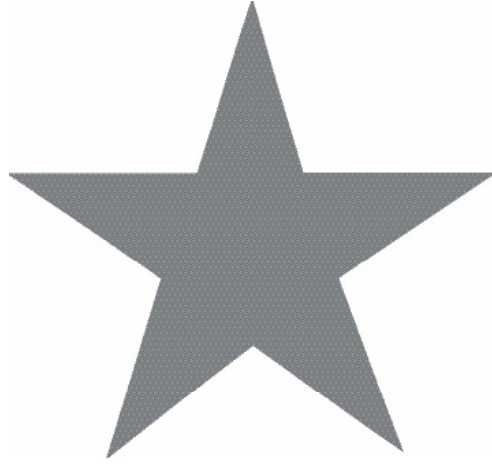
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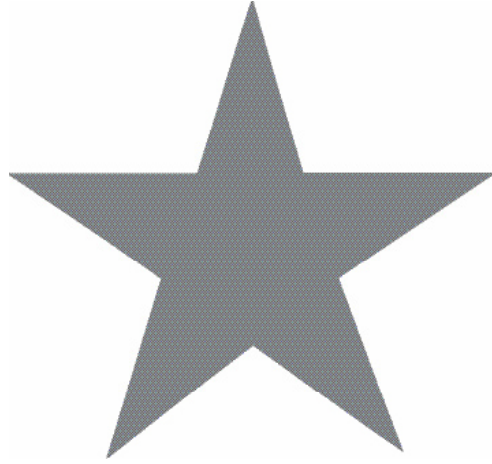
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ARTISTS

ABTV	Aldo Menéndez
Francis Acea	Aldito Menéndez
Pavel Acosta	Beverly Mojena
Jairo Alfonso Castellanos	Maritza Molina
(José Luis) Alonso Mateo	Glexis Novoa
Alexandre Arrechea	Antonio Núñez
Arte Calle	Ordo Amoris Cabinet
Juan Pablo Ballester	Ernesto Oroza
James Bonachea	Cristina Padura
Saidel Brito	Alain Pino
Tania Bruguera	Humberto Planas
La Campana Independent Group (The Bell)	Segundo Planes
María Magdalena Campos Pons	Provisional Group
Yoan Capote	Ernesto Pujol
Consuelo Castañeda	Rigoberto Quintana
Nilo Castillo	Rubert Quintana
Sandra Ceballos	Ángel Ricardo Ríos
Raúl Cordero	(Ritual) Art-De (Art-Rights)
Arturo Cuenca	Fernando Rodríguez & Francisco de la Cal
Angel Delgado	René Francisco Rodríguez
El Soca & Fabian	Carlos Rodríguez Cárdenas
ENEMA Collective	Fernando Rodríguez
Henry Eric	Joel Rojas
Antonio Eligio Fernández "Tonel"	Yali Romagoza
Coco Fusco	Lázaro Saavedra
Carlos Garaicoa	Jorge Sanchez-Calderon
Fernando García	Leandro Soto
Alejandro González	Ezequiel Suárez
Juan-Si González	T & T
Hexágono, Team of Collective Creation	T10
Abdel Hernández	José Ángel Toirac
Charles Juhasz-Alvarado	César Trasobares
Tony Labat	Hárold Vazquez
Francisco Lastra Adorno	Liudmila Velasco
Glenda León	José Ángel Vincench
Alejandro López	Ramón Williams
Rafael López Ramos	



IN SEARCH OF LOST TIME

Time lost is life that dies.
Because time gained exists in the unknown future.
Artistic work is the accumulation of chronological stories
Artists that spend time in a vacuum are cultural possibilities that never happened
Our days are numbered and categorized.
A regressive count is an extended debt.
Not every past was better, time counts and kills.
To kill time is to repress the space of our existence,
To renounce the obligation of labor,
To discover the pleasure of waiting
Without the worries to produce, but the advantage to play with the conscience.
My version of killing time is to recover history,
Multiplying the space that was denied, practicing freedom of the will
And the possibility of having an opposite opinion.
To kill time then is to wait that one utopia consumes us so that another utopia desires us.
The duty of the artist is to get lost in life and space to increase time.
Because the artist's religion is not political but philosophical,
The love of art is the search for lost time.

EN BUSCA DEL TIEMPO PERDIDO

El tiempo que se pierde es vida que se muere.
porque el tiempo que se gana, existe en el futuro que desconoces,
la vida artística es la acumulación de historias en forma cronológica
El talento que pierde el tiempo son posibilidades culturales, que nunca se realizarán,
Nuestros días están contados y clasificados.
Una cuenta regresiva es una deuda que se extiende.
Y no todo pasado fue mejor, el tiempo cuenta y mata.
Matar el tiempo es reprimir el espacio de nuestra existencia,
Y renunciar a las obligaciones del trabajo, es también descubrir el placer
De esperar, sin la preocupación de producir.
Y con la ventaja adicional, de tener el tiempo de poder jugar con la conciencia.
Así que mi versión de matar el tiempo es recuperar la historia,
para empezar a multiplicar el espacio que nos fue negado, la libertad de la voluntad y la posibilidad
De opinar lo contrario de cualquier idea que el poder nos imponga.
Entiendo, que matar el tiempo es esperar que una utopía nos consuma,
Para que otra utopía nos desee.
El deber del artista es, perderse en la vida y en el espacio, para aumentar el tiempo,
Su religión no es política sino filosófica, el amor al arte es,
La búsqueda del tiempo perdido.

Papo Colo
Exit Art Cultural Producer, 2007

A TIMELY INTRODUCTION

Elvis Fuentes

In June of 2005, upon receiving a curatorial prize at the Ljubljana Biennial of Graphic Arts, I took advantage of my 15 minutes of fame in Slovenia in order to propose a show of Cuban art to Aleksander Bassin, Director of the Mestna Galerija (City Museum). He accepted, and we got started. That's how *Lista de espera* (*Waiting List*), the first, smaller version of the current project, was born.

I decided to develop an idea I had since 2001 when I was documenting the Ludwig Collection of Cuban Art, most of which is located at the Ludwig Forum in Aachen, Germany. I realized that, despite their popularity in the 1980s, process-art and collective projects were notably absent from the collection.¹ There was also no documentation of performances and ephemeral works--some of which were standard references when Peter Ludwig began to collect Cuban art--such as pioneer works by Leandro Soto, Hexágono, the Puré and Provisional groups or the celebrated "Juego de Pelota" ("The Ball Game").² This collection was representative of the arrival of the art market to Cuba at the beginning of the 1990s, which did not support or encourage the creation of experimental, ephemeral, and critical proposals.

Official censorship worsened due to events that shook the art scene at the end of the eighties.³ The situation during the last decades of the century was characterized by the dismissal of officials who defended artistic independence and the right of artists to free expression, the ostracism of artists, and these artists' virtual expulsion and exile from Cuba.

Interestingly enough, however, many artists on the island continued producing ground-breaking works. Their innovative spirit survived under these new circumstances, in part, due to the labor of artists who functioned as a bridge between generations, such as Lázaro Saavedra, René Francisco Rodríguez, Tania Bruguera and Sandra Ceballos. Younger artists, responding to the censorship and the arrival of the art market, strengthened their work and accessed the international circuit. Outside the island, new voices emerged, showing a new face that superseded the historically conservative artistic expression of the Cuban exile. Ground-breaking artists like Ana Mendieta, José Bedia and Félix González-Torres became influential models.⁴

Killing Time explores the continuities and discontinuities among three generations of artists, one of which has resided, for the most part, outside of the country for more than a decade. The thematic "excuse" is time, with its varied associations with experimental art practices, such as those that are ephemeral, improvisational, and transcendent. In order to update the art scene of the island, I invited the curator Yuneikys Villalonga to collaborate on the show. It then occurred to us to widen the scope, going beyond artistic concerns to include economic, sociological, and political issues, all of which matter greatly for a full understanding of the Cuban phenomenon. We then learned of the research

of Glexis Novoa on Cuban performance art in the 1980s⁵ and we invited him to join the team to work on a special section in the show.

When Ben Rodríguez-Cubefías found out about this project, he immediately offered the support of the Rockefeller Brothers Fund and Cuban Artists Fund, in order to bring the show to New York. It was primarily thanks to him that this was possible. Likewise, the directors of Exit Art, Jeanette Ingberman and Papo Colo, opened the doors of their terrific institution and adopted it as their own. They encouraged us to expand it, especially the performance art section, in keeping with the tradition of this exhibition space. We are very thankful to them and to their wonderful team: Sarah Ryhanen, Mary Katherine Matalon, Bryan Mesenbourg, Jodi Hanel, Audrey Christensen, Fawad Khan and others.

Why Time?

On March 13, 1957, a group of students from the University of Havana carried out a very bold action: they attempted to kill the then dictator, Fulgencio Batista, in the Presidential Palace. Simultaneously, another group raided and took over Radio Reloj, a radio station that alternated news and commercial ads with the announcement of the official clock time. The students sought changes in the political terrain and wanted to symbolically stop Batista's clock while they proclaimed his execution. The attack failed and the students were killed. Soon the resistance movement by university students was named "The 13th of March" as a tribute to these revolutionaries.

This date is not significant because of the result of the action, but rather because of its symbolism and the way that, with time, it acquired other meanings. During the 1970s and 1980s, The 13th of March came to designate the university competition in the fine arts and specific art practices that treated art as "a weapon of the Revolution." Later, in 1994, this date was "resemanticized" into a symbol of tragedy. A tugboat known as The 13th of March was occupied by dozens of civilians in their attempt to migrate to the United States. When intercepted by a Cuban coast guard, the tugboat sank. Dozens of people died, including many children. Following the incident, which happened on July 13, 1994, the so-called Rafters' Crisis began. Thousands of people left the island on improvised boats and precarious rafts. It is not known how many people died in the attempted crossing to reach the coasts of Florida.

The artist Saidel Brito captured that moment with the chilling installation *Trece* (1995), made up of thirteen funerary wreaths laid out on the floor of the gallery, as if they were floating on the water. In an earlier piece Brito had used a similar setting. Its tone, however, was less grave, and was even festive. *Voisin Migration* (1994) consisted of several heads of cows--made out of clay--placed on the floor in a long row. They looked like a herd crossing a river. The artist was referring, ironically, to the living conditions of Cubans by illustrating a popular saying "with the water up to the neck," which means living very poorly. However, after only a year, irony yielded to tragedy. The funerary wreaths replaced the

heads of cows, symbolizing all those who drowned in the sea, especially those of the tugboats that sank on the 13th of July of 1994.⁶

Let's go back to 1957. "To stop Batista's clock" meant to intervene in the island's time, something that was achieved when Fidel Castro's revolution assumed power. 1959 became Year 0 in the new Cuban calendar, as the government began to name the years with reference to self-imposed goals or to the time elapsed since their ascent to power: "Year 10 of the Revolution's triumph," "Year 30," "Year 31," and so on.⁷ In the process, history was rewritten with a new repertory of important historical events, commemorations, and celebrations. Every December 31, the country received the new year with a message from Fidel Castro aired on all radio and TV stations. Every 26th of July was preceded by feverish building activities in some province chosen to celebrate its progress on the "Day of National Rebellion." Each year, in April we sang a song of victory over "Yankee Imperialism" at Girón Beach--which sounds better than "Bay of Pigs" as it is known outside Cuba. Time was therefore a revolutionary obsession.

The "Salonism" of the 1970s

The "time" factor is crucial in contemporary art. Because of the way that art schedules are organized, the demands placed by an economy of creation--i.e., time, work, and materials--encourage the adoption of procedures which often become academic formulae. Mannerisms dominate in the art making of the day; many are defined by the type of circuit in which the work circulates. Devices such as serialism, repetition, and recollection have become shortcuts for the concepts and aesthetics of such practices. Also many subjects are treated as clichés, such as the relation between the public and the private, the mapping of more or less exotic social and cultural practices, and the symbolic use of materials. Often art merely illustrates such themes in a very didactic way.

In the 1970s in Cuba, many such mannerisms emerged and were promoted institutionally. The 13th of March Competition was one of the best of dozens of similar events organized throughout the country. The provincial and national salons and those put on by mass organizations and official institutions--sometimes organized around themes--proliferated following the celebrated Salón 70, which presented the first artists educated under the regime of the Revolution, also known by the "The Generation of True Hope".⁸

Salons and contests had at least two effects on the island's art scene. They promoted a type of "populist" art exhibit consisting of a panoramic view, which is a collective--and often uncritical--show of all kinds of artistic production. They also led to the production of works whose themes were often disconnected from the poetics of the artists. Cuban art critics identified this phenomenon as "Salonism".

Besides the effects of salons, there were the working conditions of artists, who, for the most part, performed social-oriented jobs--they taught at schools; developed programs and workshops at cultural institutions and factories; worked

as book and stage designers at publishing houses and theaters--and for that reason had little time to develop their individual work. Thus, a great part of the period's production is marked by contingency and by the pressure of trying to meet deadlines.

Temporal Patterns

Temporal patterns are a recurring device in art and often endow the work with a subtle narrative. Intervals, resistance, and durability as well as dates, important events, and anachronistic objects related to time--all these become an excuse to tackle other issues. For example, in *Fight: A Practical Romance* (1978), Tony Labat transformed his studio in San Francisco into a boxing gym for one year, during which he trained to become a professional boxer. This inquiry into the anxiety of competition concluded with a match that yielded a photography series and a canvas with the sweat and blood from the artist's wounds.

César Trasobares dug out from the past a stock character, the Quinceañera (a girl celebrating her fifteenth birthday, equivalent to the Sweet Sixteen in America), who would accompany him during his actions (*Non-Invitational Performance*, 1978) or be the theme of installations or photography series. For their part, José Toirac and Tanya Angulo involved the conceptual artist Gustavo Pérez Monzón in a dialogue-exhibit with other creators during a period of *18 days* (1989), for which the project was named. Meanwhile, in *The hair grows (Self-portraits)* (1989), Alonso Mateo photographically recorded the growth of his hair on his shaved head. Juan-Si González--in his performance *A Day Like Any Other* (1987)--subjected his half-naked body painted with clouds to urban pollution, as he stood in the middle of heavy traffic in a Havana street until he felt like he was fainting.⁹

By placing twelve beds in the shape of a big analog clock in the gardens of the Higher Institute of Art (Instituto Superior de Arte), Segundo Planes resorted to a more literal image that nevertheless still retains the character of an action in *Killing the Oneiric* (1983). Consuelo Castañeda's more object-based *Portrait of My Mother and Me* (1988) features an inscription of the date of birth of both on an acetate plate using hairs. Rafael López Ramos's coat of arms humorously represents a *Day of Cuban Culture* (1989). In *Cuban Calendar* (2007), Rigoberto Quintana has used the calendar format and its repetition to denote a historical obsession of the exile: the death of Fidel Castro.

A Culture of Records

Fidel Castro is among the world's longest ruling leaders, against whom the greatest number of assassinations have been planned, with almost 50 years of opposition to imperialism and with half a century of Revolution in the face of the "neighbor to the North." In fact, Cuba holds several Guinness World Records: The longest speech in the history of the United Nations--Fidel Castro's, of course; the longest "tobacco,"¹¹ the cow that produced the most milk in one day;¹² the largest simultaneous chess match; the longest time controlling and kicking a ball.¹³ A society that fought to eradicate the

“vestiges” of capitalism persevered nevertheless in the culture of excesses and records.

Following this “tradition,” the show *Killing Time* gathers a record number of contemporary Cuban artists (over 80), including several groups, which elevates the number of “beneficiaries” to over one hundred. It is true that not everything that is included here are traditional “works,” because a great part are ephemeral, interventions, and performances. The pieces have traveled all the way from Havana, Miami, Chicago, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Phoenix, North Carolina, Ohio, Vancouver, Mexico City, Puerto Rico, Madrid, Paris, Athens, Zurich, Cologne, and, of course, New York. Some are veritable individual or collective feats.

For instance, sketches and documentation of an ephemeral sculpture titled *Contenido neto: 2000 kg de jabón rosa (Net weight: 2000 kg of Pink Soap)* (1997) was produced by Francisco Lastra Adorno at the Museo Universitario del Chopo in Mexico City. In this work, Lastra parodied the culture of records by building a life-size model of the Granma¹⁴ out of an iron structure and two tons of pink soap. The artist declared that he wanted the work to be listed in the Guinness Book of World Records as the largest boat ever made out of soap (originally he intended to use 5 tons).

The performance entitled *Record Güines* (2000) by Enema, a group of 13 artists, consisted of the famous Cuban percussionist, Tata Güines, taking a bicycle-taxi ride from the city of Güines to Havana. The members of the group took turns driving the vehicle. Enema responds ironically to the notion that extraordinary effort has a value in itself. On other occasions, they reinterpreted the classic performances of bodily resistance from the perspective of shared effort.¹⁵ Paradoxically, an article published in the review *Enema* in 2000 defended the idea of work having artistic value, and some members, such as the duo El Soca & Fabián, have recuperated this notion by creating a dinosaur out of insect legs and wings. This “addiction” to work is also perceptible in the sculptures by the fictional character Francisco de la Cal, who is a blind peasant, created as an alter-ego by Fernando Rodríguez, and the drawings by Joel Rojas, produced while he waited for buyers at the Cathedral Square in Havana.

The Puré Generation

As representatives of a society formed and led by workers and peasants, the artists of the “Generation of True Hope” represented a new productive reality for the major work of art: the revolutionary epic.¹⁶ “Salonism” promoted the “true artists”: martyrs, guajiros (peasants), construction workers, sugar-cane cutters, and even scientists and astronauts who characterized the decade of the 1970s and the following one.¹⁷

The mid 1980s saw a change in the approach to the subject of time. Previously, there had been fundamental renewals in the art scene: aesthetically, with the exhibit *Volumen I* (1981), which signaled the “bringing-up-to-date” of Cuban art through the use of experimental languages and techniques such as performance, installation, and ephemeral

interventions; institutional changes, with the creation of the Havana Biennial and the incipient development of a market for Cuban art in the West, part of a strategy for international presentation by the Ministry of Culture; and ideological shifts with the dissemination of certain ideas selectively chosen from post-modern theories and which were popularized through *Criterios*, a magazine edited by the polyglot and occasional performer, Desiderio Navarro. The conditions were conducive to the development of a new artistic sensibility rooted in event or performance art, which was experimental, ephemeral, casual, and often critical.

The new generation responded to the demand on the part of officialdom by participating more actively in the so-called “Process of Rectification of Mistakes and Negative Tendencies (1986),”¹⁸ demanding a greater presence in important projects and in “succeeding” the “old guard.” For such a goal, they put forth a proposal of aesthetic renovation based on urban and marginal popular culture. It was common for groups to come together to organize events in which the public participated and, from the creative point of view, to use devices such as recycling, appropriation, pastiche, and parody, which they had learned from masters such as Flavio Garcíandía and Consuelo Castañeda. The founding group, Puré (literally, “puree”), hardly left any documentary traces of their projects, but they established a way of making art that spread, thanks to their members and admirers.

Productive Work Day

Construction is more than a job; it is the collective effort to materialize utopia, progress, and development. For this reason it became a recurrent topic since Leandro Soto began to create sculptures with precarious materials and photographs in *Kiko constructor* (1983). Artists absorbed many other elements of productive culture—symbols, instruments, and techniques—and they subordinated them to their personal poetics.

For instance, Carlos Rodríguez Cárdenas produced a celebrated self-portrait *I Do Not Exist; Only My Intention Does* (1987), in which his body is metaphorically portrayed as a brick building with a tiny house in the place of his heart. He also created performances in which, playing construction worker, he would “finish” with stucco silk-screen prints depicting brick walls, and distributed them (*Easy-to-get Originals*, 1988). This artist also created murals and paintings that parodied official slogans, some of which featured the image of the man/building, a distinctive sign of his work.

The man/building is probably the most sophisticated metaphor in Cuban art in relation to the concept of the “New Man” promoted by some ideologues of the Revolution. However, the fact that the image originated from the work of a critical artist did away with any possibility of apologetically recycling it. The metaphor soon acquired a set of other variations when the social edifice it represented collapsed at the end of the 1980s. Among the transformations that this man/building has suffered and that emerged from the experience of exile are: the man/boat, boat/island, man/lighthouse, and man/bridge.

For his part, Alejandro López created Super A, a super hero character who wears a white helmet and, to this day in New York, delivers speeches based on philosophical and scientific theories perched atop large fortified constructions. The speeches by Super A are a parody of the criticism that prevailed from the mid-1980s on and which was characterized by an abuse of terminology drawn from aesthetics, philosophy and other branches of knowledge.

Metamorfosis (Microbrigade) (1992), by Lázaro Saavedra is a series of paintings about his traumatic “immersion” in a micro brigade in 1989, a self-help collective created in 1970 with the objective of allowing workers to build their own housing. The amateurism of the members of the group was responsible for the exceptionally bad quality of the buildings, and the model soon failed due to laziness, corruption, or the intervention of the State, which could arbitrarily make use of the buildings. Starting with the title, Saavedra refers to his experience as similar to that of Gregory Samsa, the character of Franz Kafka’s short story *Metamorphosis*. In twelve sarcastic scenes, Saavedra alternates images of masterpieces from the history of art with absurd situations that he faced everyday.

Years later, Henry Eric and Producciones Dobocho portrayed the shocking reality of the micro brigade movement from the perspective of a group of its members in the documentary *Almacén* (2001). Curiously, in Puerto Rico, Charles Juhasz-Alvarado created a fiction about an artist who had dedicated his time to volunteer in the construction of an *Art Museum* (2000), which would eventually house his works, but who discovered that the construction workers did everything else but work.

At the beginning of the 1990s, construction gave way to decline and skepticism. If the pedagogical project of *La Casa Nacional (The National House)* (1991) by René Francisco Rodríguez helped poor people repair their homes, the early “archaeological” works by Carlos Garaicoa (*Gran Hotel, 39, Homenaje al Hotel San Carlos [Grand Hotel, 39, Homage to the San Carlos Hotel]*, 1991) were merely urban interventions that would highlight a distinctive feature of the past in derelict buildings. The spirit had died off. Perhaps one should point out that Henry Eric remains the sole practitioner of this work—his projects in a school and the Catholic and Jewish cemeteries of Havana and Guanabacoa consisted of, respectively, repairing the rest room for the students and creating funeral urns for the dead of poor families.

In 2004, the Atelier Morales duo visited and photographed 25 emblematic sugar mills from the 19th century that had been portrayed by traveling European artists. The series became a denunciation of the abandonment and dismantling of national Cuban heritage.¹⁹ Humberto Planas produced sculptures using timber in outdoor spaces, simulating the construction of monuments or structures that were apparently being built only to be later dismantled, frustrating the expectations of the public and leaving the bitter aftertaste of illusion. For his part, Alejandro González has

documented the unfinished building projects in the Havana neighborhood of Alamar, a former symbol of revolutionary progress.

Relaxing on the Grass

Rewarding superhuman effort is the most elaborate expression of a culture of exploitation disguised as a culture of work. This idea lived its most critical moment in the 1970s due to the failure of the ten million ton sugar harvest, another record. Sundays were declared “red” and workers and students were forced to perform “volunteer work.” Vacations “were for vacant lots with cows” (in Spanish, “para las vacas”) since students were sent to perform agricultural work. The exemplary worker was exalted in the figure of the “Vanguardia Nacional” (National Vanguard), who dedicates his or her free time to the work of the Revolution. Those who were part of this process could receive rewards: The right to buy a car or a new TV set, an apartment in a building recently built by micro brigades, a trip throughout Cuba or overseas.²⁰

Perhaps the most powerful critique of this manipulation of the culture of work by those in power was carried out by the conceptual artist Arturo Cuenca in 1989. After a few cases of censorship in regards to groups that performed actions on the street, the idea emerged to turn the Castle of the Royal Force into the seat of the most pressing ideological-aesthetic discussions. Cuenca perceived this gesture as a real demonstration of strength and reacted accordingly, although in a relatively cryptic manner in his show *The Castle of the Royal Force: Science vs. Ideology*. In this project, the fortress became the work itself, a scene he would explore—via actions, forums, and debates—the relationship between art and power, which was to be understood in terms of science and ideology, with respect to work. In the text for the catalog, Cuenca identified science as the justification of work at the social level as a “theoretical moment,” while ideology was the “justification of power of no work,” “false knowledge,” a “pseudo-synthesis that legitimize the no-work of the dominant classes.” Thus, ideology was only practiced by the “bureau-transported troops of the ideocrats” and power was only the “‘phatuosm’ of a beautiful castle.” He ended up exclaiming: “Long live the power of work.” By identifying ideologues with bureaucrats, Cuenca was doing nothing less than pointing to them as the true enemies of the rectification process.²¹

Also in circumstances of exile, artists have denounced the exploitation of workers linked to the experience of migration and sexist discrimination. The video-performance *Dolores from 10 to 10* (2001) by Coco Fusco narrates how a female worker is forced by a supervisor to sign a resignation statement without being compensated for her work. Fusco simulates a tape recorded by the factory’s video security system. The work is based on a true story. On the other hand, Maritza Molina develops photographs and videos in which she “works for the man” as in one where she tugs a cart filled with business executives (*Carrying Traditions*).

Another trend, equally critical of the productivist rhetoric within the Revolution, albeit a tangential one, emerged from

free time. Music and pop dances were topics that were especially attractive to young artists. From the mid 1970s onward, Flavio Garcíandía celebrated rest and relaxation in paintings like *Todo lo que usted necesita es amor (All You Need Is Love)* (1975), which portrays the painter Zaida del Río lying on the grass.²² The work took its title from the translation of a song by The Beatles, which at the time was banned on the island. Ten years later, Glexis Novoa and the Grupo Cívico organized a sort of break dance competition entitled *Al final todos bailan juntos (In the End All Dance Together)* (1986).²³

However, the codification of free time has been varied. In the year 2001, Antonio Núñez presented an installation consisting of a series of small cots used in children's circles during nap time. On the fabric, using a silk-screen process, he printed chilling images: children without faces, parents with wolf heads, little girls with strange and eroticized adult bodies. Núñez imagined the dreams of children forced to take naps and he allegorized the dream of a young generation, forced to live the utopia of their elders. Free time here becomes a time of oppression.

Meanwhile, Galería DUPP was heading in a different direction: this group of students mentored by René Francisco created an intervention in a department store called *La Época* (2000) by deeming it a "substitute" for the Museum of Fine Arts, which at the time was closed. "Shops are defining people's taste. Many go there as they would go to a museum: to see but not touch," was DUPP's statement. Interestingly, the department store *La Época* welcomed the project, but the National Museum of Fine Arts continues to ignore the tradition of performance on the island. After being closed several years for renovation the Museum opened to the public in 2001, exhibiting part of its Cuban art collections from colonial times to present. No work of performance art was included.

From Fun to Subversion

The origin of performance and other forms of ephemeral and conceptual art in Cuba has been associated with recreation. For instance, in the first performance art event, *Festival de la Pieza Corta (Festival of the Short Piece)* (1980), was staged at a house on the beach the artists rented for a weekend. The works of numerous artists working in collaboration were presented there; they mixed theatrical and kitsch elements with actions and text. In a similar vein, Hexagon, a group that came together during a vacation period in 1982, created ephemeral works such as interventions in the landscape.

According to this "lazy" origin of performance on the Island, Glexis Novoa has defined it as a "jodenedera," a popular term used to refer to a relaxed action, without the seriousness ascribed to it elsewhere. This would be, in Novoa's opinion, the distinctive mark of Cuban performance art.²⁴ This can also be seen in the work of artists residing outside the island, such as César Trasobares in Miami, Tony Labat in California, Carmelita Tropicana in New York, and Félix González Torres in Puerto Rico. To Trasobares's "Quinceañera" and

Labat's boxing match we could add González Torres tourist impersonations in at least two performances presented between 1981 and 1983. Likewise, beginning with her name, Carmelita Tropicana assumes an identity connected to the entertainment business--after the mythical cabaret Tropicana in Havana--and plays a character from popular culture: Pingalito Betancourt.

Interestingly, the "light" character of these works did not prevent artists from dealing with serious themes. In fact, the most entertaining of all the events, *All Stars: Cuban Artists Dedicate to Baseball* (1989), known as "The Baseball Game," was also the most subversive.

However, there is a nucleus of artists that approached the medium using a different tone. For example, Leandro Soto, Ana Mendieta, and Manuel Mendive alluded to rituals rooted in Afro-Cuban traditions in the 1980s; Tania Bruguera revisited the work of Mendieta, after her untimely death in 1985; and Coco Fusco, Maritza Molina, Cristina Padura and Group 609 addressed a variety of feminist issues. Also María Magdalena Campos Pons, Juan-Si and El Soca & Fabian (who are living in the United States), as well as Ezequiel Suárez, Tania Bruguera and many younger artists (who have attended the Behavioral Art School) deal with subjects linked to anthropology, politics, or art itself. In the eighties, Juan-Si and Jorge Crespo from Art.De group, La Campana Independent Group and Ángel Delgado performed political actions that were very controversial.

As the artists became more "serious" and criticized the government, they were dubbed "pseudo-artists," a common tactic used by culture officials to discredit others. Sadly, some international critics served as spokespeople for such officials. In his book on Cuban art of the period, Luis Camnitzer wrote: "people in the art world who witnessed the performances" (put on by Ritual Art.De) "found [in them] a notable lack of artistic merit."²⁵

Responding to similar criticism, La Campana organized *Academica* (1989), an exhibition and performance in which the members of the group presented academic-style works of art and attended the opening wearing formal attire--a strange form of dress on the island. Joel Rojas, for his part, was expelled by the ISA for painting a satirical portrait of Fidel Castro and was called a pseudo-artist and "enemy" by the Minister of Culture, an incident that shut the doors of Cuban institutions to him. For months Rojas made "rupestrian" paintings in a cave outside Havana. He mixed iconic references to natives with motifs taken from political propaganda. Later on, he was able to return to the city and survived by painting canvases for the tourist market on Havana's Plaza de la Catedral.

Due to the reigning prejudices against "artistic merit" and the persecution they were subjected to, these artist groups disbanded and never received any attention.²⁶

Scraps of Life

In 1979, Leandro Soto began a series of performances or

“visual actions,” as they were called at the time. *The Man and the Oar Ropes* (1979) took place on a beach in Cienfuegos at dusk. The artist produced several arrangements using old ropes and a piece of a sail he collected from the sea. In this way, Soto metaphorically represented the beauty and memory of used objects rendered old by the water.

Aging and death is represented in works by other artists, such as Consuelo Castañeda in her photographic installation that shows parts of the naked body of her 70-year-old mother (*A Book with 70 Pages*, 1988). Ramón Williams discovers the surprise of his old father before the art world—he became an artist in his seventies—and represents his lifeless body in a compassionate and festive way. The title of Williams’ photograph is *Heart Art Attack*. Death is yielded to in the thirteen funeral wreaths of Saidel Brito, and steps back in Henry Eric’s interventions in cemeteries, which offers memorials for people healing from the worst of miseries.

Material poverty and human richness are seen in the early work of the disbanded group Ordo Amoris Cabinet,²⁷ in the exhibition *Water and sugar* (1996). Functional objects replace other objects as a response to scarcity and crisis. They embody the “Aesthetics of the Provisional.” Two important symbols created by Ordo Amoris years later were the taxi-limousine made out of two Lada cars, collectivizing this private means of transportation, and a series of antennas made out of all kinds of recycled materials: a reference to the government prosecution of people attempting to tune into TV channels other than the official National Cuban Television.

Ernesto Oroza continued this research on the aesthetics of the provisional and developed other concepts, such as “technological disobedience” and “art of the necessity.” Oroza has published widely on the subject. For instance, one piece in his series records the many applications attributed to the engine of a washing machine, including use as an electric fans and as a motorized bicycle. The jewels made out of non-noble metals and cheap crystals reach luxury through its very antithesis—recycling.

The work of Ordo Amoris prepared the way for younger artists such as Beverly Mojena, whose clothes, shoes, and accessories are all made from recycled plastic bags. These clothes, and the shopping bags out of which they are made, evoke associations with the consumer culture of shopping malls, a new phenomenon on the island in the decade of the nineties. Francis Acea revisits the motif of the antenna, turning it into an emblem of triumph in exile, as seen in the *Golden Years* (2006).

Many artists have approached the theme of loss due to migration and exile. Liudmila Velasco and Nelson Ramírez de Orellano developed a project in which they documented the houses of friends they used to visit and who have since left the country, plotting the fragments of a vast territory they are gradually losing. Something similar was represented by Ezequiel Suárez when he produced the performance *Cada artista que se va es un pedazo que se pierde* (*Each Artist*

that Leaves Is a Piece We Lose) (1995), in which, standing from a scaffolding, he would beat the roof and walls of his house, Espacio Aglutinador, knocking down small pieces of the building.

Juan-Si González approaches the topic of absence through a performative project based in geography, *Looking Inside for Cuba*, in which he visits towns called Cuba in several states of the United States. For his part, José Ángel Vincench lays bare the tension of “inside” and “outside” in *Zoom o Dr. Jekyll y Mr. Hyde* (*Zoom or Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*) (2000), a collage of fragments from the newspaper *Granma* and images taken from foreign TV broadcasts showing peaceful objectors to the regime in Cuba.

Before and After

As in ads for beauty products, the political propaganda of the Revolution teaches us that the “after” is always better. Such a temporal mark in Cuba is the year 1959. Educational materials, TV, radio, press reports, films, books and other media show the younger generations the changes that have taken place since then. Younger generations buy the marvels of a new age with the miseries of the previous regime. Having a past codified as shame, only attacks on the 13th of March attempting exorcisms survived. History was rewritten, and a new calendar of dates for commemorations was created.

As a logical counterpoint, the exiled communities in Miami, New Jersey, Puerto Rico, and Spain, among other places, have preserved the memory from before 1959. But these communities write their own calendar of events from that date on with the same repressive zeal that a dictatorship would use. An example of this is the project *Bay of Pigs*, by George Sánchez-Calderón, created to commemorate the attack on the Bay of Pigs in the hangar where the survivors were received when they returned from the island. The artist reproduced miniature models of all the airplanes used during the operation and placed them in display cases. Other parts of this piece included an installation inside a trailer, a reference to the sealed trailer where some of the participants in the expedition died as they were transported to Havana,²⁸ as well as a door decorated with lights. Finally, he produced a huge inflatable model of a mad pig that hovered above the viewers. The inflatable pig provoked angry reactions from some people who vandalized the installation stabbing the pig and destroying several airplanes and display cases. A local political commentator affirmed the animal should have had a beard (like Fidel Castro), “so no one is doubtful of who the pig is.”

It is within these complex temporal circumstances that the three generations of *Killing Time* grew up. The oldest lived the last years of the Cold War, with its witch-hunts and corrective “parametrizations.” The youngest have witnessed the episode of Elián González, the rafter boy, rescued from the waters of Miami and returned to Cuba. All have been marked by a historical time that has become a time of waiting, boredom, observation and anxiety, as seen in the works by Alonso Mateo, Pavel Acosta, Glenda León, and Yoan Capote—a time that has led to the ambiguity of Rubert Quin-

tana's kernel of corn in *All the Glory in the World* (1999). Is this a flowering or an explosion? Perhaps, as in the motto in Iván Capote's *Dyslexia* (2003): "Life is a text we learn to read all too late." That is, if we ever learn to see the text, read the signs, and glimpse death, the only one that has time on its side.

Elvis Fuentes Guttenberg, NJ, April 2007

¹ Except perhaps the works by ABTV group and by the duo René Francisco y Ponjuán, which dialogued with the Soviet avant-garde and realist socialist art. The important exhibit *Kuba O.K.* (Kunsthalle Dusseldorf, Germany, 1990) did not include performances either.

² The documentation of early performances by Soto was produced in the form of text collage, making them unique works, attractive to any collector. Likewise, Hexágono produced a corpus of photographic works that were very appealing in their interaction with the landscape. *The Baseball Game* was documented by photographer José A. Figueroa, a prominent figure in the history of the medium in Cuba. The Ludwig Collection, assembled in consultation with prestigious experts, has a large collection of photography and experimental works. This important area of contemporary Cuban art, however, was overlooked.

³ Among the exhibitions censored were solo shows of Tomás Esson (*A tarro partido II*, at the Gallery at 23rd and 12th Streets, 1988), ABTV group (*Homenaje a Hans Haacke /Homage to Hans Haacke*), and the duo René Francisco and Ponjuán (*Artista melodramático/ Melodramatic artist*), at the Castle of the Royal Force in 1989. Vice Minister of Culture Marcia Leiseca was fired for supporting these artists. Also censored were the group shows *Nueve alquimistas y un ciego* (*Nine alchemists and a blind man*) at Galería L, University of Havana (1989), which caused the firing of director Marta Limia, and *Arte Cubano Actual* (*Cuban Art Today*), which was scheduled to open in downtown Havana on November 15, 1991, during the Havana Biennial. This exhibit was postponed several times and finally moved to the outskirts of Havana. Some members of the groups Art.De, Arte Calle and La Campana were detained. In 1990, Ángel Delgado was sent to prison for his performance *Hope is the last thing we are losing* during the opening of an exhibition at the Center for the Development of the Visual Arts, and director Beatriz Aulet was fired.

⁴ Although Ana Mendieta died in 1985, her contribution became more visible internationally in the 1990s.

⁵ *Cuban Performance Art of 1980s* (*The Chronology*), Miami Dade Community College Gallery, Miami, 1998.

⁶ Trece also alluded to the popular superstition of bad luck and to a ritual that is celebrated yearly on the island to commemorate the disappearance of Commander Camilo Cienfuegos in October 1959. On that date, school children throw flowers into the sea, where supposedly, according to the official version, the airplane that was taking him from Camagüey to Havana fell. Because of the strange circumstances surrounding his disappearance and because no remains of the plane were ever found, many people question the official version.

⁷ The 1789 French Revolution also attempted to renew time creating the Calendar of the First French Republic, and during the Paris Commune in 1871, the rebels fired at clocks and took over the same calendar.

⁸ They were recent graduates of the National Art School (ENA), founded in 1967, and they showed with the masters of the avant-garde from the 1930s and 1950s.

⁹ The device of the interval has also been employed by artists in other media such as in the film *Suite Habana* (*Suite Havana*) (2005), in which Fernando Pérez presents a day in the life of several people.

¹⁰ 638 murder attempts, according to Fabián Escalante, the former Chief of State Security ("The Castropedia: Fidel's Cuba in Facts and Figures": Simon Osborne, *The Independent*, London, January 17, 2007.)

¹¹ In Cuban slang, "tabaco" ("tobacco") also means "speech".

¹² The cow named Ubre blanca (White udder) died in 1985 and earned an obituary in the newspaper *Granma*. In 2002, an attempt to clone her failed.

¹³ It doesn't matter if the Cuban soccer team is lousy—the records are enthusiastically amassed by propaganda mechanisms because they constitute the achievements of individuals in a collective system.

¹⁴ The yacht used by Fidel Castro in his expedition against the government of Fulgencio Batista in 1956.

¹⁵ For instance, they remained tied by a rope around the waist for a week instead of a year, and they held up a block of ice until it melted, but taking turns in order to avoid physical injury. The works make reference to *El año de la sogá* (*The Year of the Rope*) (1983-84) by Linda Montano and Tehching Hsieh, a piece in which these two artists remained tied together with a rope for an entire year, and a performance in which Marina Abramovic holds a block of ice with her forearms.

¹⁶ Rafael Rojas has studied the guilt complex of intellectuals who did not participate in the revolutionary fight against Batista and how "artists" ceded their recognition in favor of the revolutionaries in his book of essays *Tumbas sin sosiego*. *Revolución, disidencia y exilio del intelectual cubano*. Anagrama, Barcelona, Spain, 2006.

¹⁷ The animated cartoon "My Father Tightens Nuts" would reveal to the eyes of a child how important the profession of his father was, because without nuts, cars would fall apart, bridges would collapse, as would factories and space shuttles. The official Cuban Television produced this cartoon.

¹⁸ The "Process of Rectification of Mistakes and Negative Tendencies" was an official

political agenda launched by Fidel Castro in 1986 as a response to the reforms initiated by socialist countries such as Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Eastern Germany and the Soviet Union. It was intended to struggle bureaucracy, inefficiency, corruption, and many other "mistakes". Castro asked the new generation to take part of this process by criticizing the wrongdoings of the establishment. After a song by Carlos Valera, which speaks of the request of William Tell's son to take the crossbow, this generation was called "The Children of William Tell".

¹⁹ In 2004, the government dismantled 70 sugar mills, destroying a considerable part of Cuban industrial heritage. Perhaps this decision was the result of the idea that in a transition to democracy, those properties would be returned to their former owners. That measure condemned to a ghostly existence many communities whose economic subsistence depended on sugar.

²⁰ This was recorded on television in an entertainment show called 9550—the name alluded to the kilometers between Havana and Moscow—in which the winner earned a trip to the Soviet Union, something equivalent to Utopia ("Paradise on Earth" seemed too religious), a remote and strange yet attainable place. The program disappeared soon after the collapse of socialism, betraying the temporality inherent in all Utopias. Some years later, as a result of emigration treaties between Cuba and the United States negotiated after the Balsero Rafter Crisis, a visa lottery was established, and thousands of families applied to that program hoping to legally emigrate "North."

²¹ In a cartoon by Raúl de la Nuez, published in the review *América Latina* (no. 12, December 1988), the representation of an imperialist (a man carrying a big stick and a hat with the US flag) and that of a bureaucrat (a man sitting at a desk with a phone and a big rubber stamp).

²² The social representation of the artist as the average Cuban, including the cultural organization bureaucrats, was, of course, the "lazy bum," i.e., people who did not work and would spend most of their time partying, away from productive social cycles. That's the reason why Garcíandías painting was doubly subversive—with respect to revolutionary rhetoric and to stereotypes.

²³ The official press considered these dances in which the body would twist and turn as products of a decadent capitalist society.

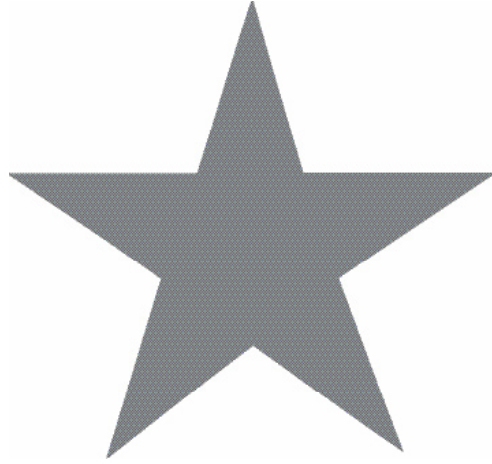
²⁴ In subsequent decades, other artists can be cited to confirm this opinion, including the Enema and DUPP groups, the Omarito and Duvier Duo, and James Bonachea, among others.

²⁵ Camnitzer, Luis. *New Art of Cuba*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994, p. 188.

²⁶ Some members of Art.De and La Campana were jailed. Currently, Armando Martínez Rueda, a member of La Campana, has been in prison since 1995.

²⁷ Manuel Piña, Juan Bernal, Ernesto Oroza, Francis Acea and Diango Hernández comprised the group, the latter two were the last remaining to work together from 1997 to 2003 and initially formed Ordo Amoris Cabinet. Piña was the first to leave the group right before the exhibition *Water and sugar*. After him, Bernal left in 1996, and Oroza in 1997.

²⁸ Osmani Cienfuegos, brother of deceased Commander Camilo Cienfuegos and currently the Minister of Tourism, has been pointed out as responsible for this tragedy. He is married to Marcia Leiseca, the Ex-Vice Minister of Culture, who was fired from her post after defending artists René Francisco and Ponjuán (1989).



THE CONSECRATION OF MISCHIEF THE ORIGINS OF PERFORMANCE ART IN CUBA

Glexis Novoa

Kokoriokos & Kakafuakos (1970s)

Samuel Feijó (San Juan de las Yeras, 1914-1992) was an artist who left an idiosyncratic influence on his colleagues. He was the editor of two art magazines, *Islas* (1958) and *Signos* (1969), which were devoted to the promotion of pre-Columbian literature and art, as well as the myths and traditions of rural popular culture. His talent and personality were legendary, and many artists discovered in his actions, ideas related to performance art. Feijó illustrated his public interventions with a Dadaist spirit, in the form of happenings. The audience was always anxious to find out what he had hidden in his ubiquitous bag, out of which he would take out all kinds of object (shoes, edible roots, stones) in order to support an argument or defend an opinion.

Benjamin Duarte (Caonao, 1900-1974), another active collaborator in *Islas* and *Signos*, would organize events in which he dressed in specific colors that would, in turn, determine the coloring of the food he prepared and digested at that moment. Interestingly, in Paris in 1971, a very different and far-removed context, the Catalan artist Antoni Miralda (Barcelona, Spain, 1942) selected the same motif for one of his actions, *Ritual en Cuatro Colores* (*Ritual in Four Colors*).

Guayacón is a little known “folk” artist. During the 1970s he created works that could be considered participatory or performance art. *La Bomba Fría* (*The Cold Bomb*) consisted of a series of carbon gas explosions produced by a sculpture in the shape of a mortar, which the artist himself detonated in front of a fire station in Cienfuegos as an act of protest. *La Quema de Hatuey* (*The Burning of Hatuey*) (1987) was another sculpture made of wood and wax, which the artist burned during the opening of a group show. As the statuette that represented an indigenous martyr burned, a foul-smelling liquid (something similar to urine) was spilled as an irreverent gesture against the conventional nature of art. The event concluded with groups of firefighters monitoring the development of a process-artwork.

Aldo Menéndez (1948, Cienfuegos), an artist and cultural promoter, remembers that he accompanied his close friend Feijó in manipulating the organization and installation of cow’s dung in the countryside at the end of the 1960s as a work of art. Years later, Menéndez would organize a group show in the form of an art action titled *La obra llega después de usted* (*The Artwork Arrives after You*) (1982) at Galería Habana. In this piece, artists would bring and install their artworks on the same day of the opening, just as the guests were arriving.

From these examples, we can identify Samuel Feijó as a precursor of public actions. Even Leandro Soto, who is

recognized as a pioneer in his genre, declares that Feijó’s work was an early reference in his development as a performance artist.

Feijó was in contact with artists such as Jean Dubuffet, through whom he received information and ideas on the various avant-garde trends and who, in turn, he promoted in his publications. For instance, ideas and works of André Breton, Francis Picabia, Max Ernst, and many others were the content of several issues. At the same time, Feijó gave predominant space to folk and popular culture that emerged from myths and legends of Afro-Caribbean and Native spirits known as güijes, jigües, and mothers of water, kokoriokos and kakafuakos.

The Short Piece (1979)

Some performance art pioneers in Cuba recognize their first works as “jodederas,” a slang expression, loosely translated as “mischief,” that refers to a humorous action performed in a casual way, something quite informal, similar to dancing a conga, when anything can happen. The events were expressions of the typical islander mess. Even artists who today take their careers seriously admit to a lack of “seriousness” in the actions performed then. The absolute lack of an art market explains the lack of concern artists had with turning their actions into objects, including the interest in documenting the works or preserving the scarce existing documentation. The focus was the fleeting moment and what mattered, primarily, was the urgency of the statement.

At the beginning of the 1980s, artists and intellectuals got together in order to “play” with the coveted information about the avant-garde. This included topics such as installations, postmodernism, conceptualism, performance art, fluxus, happenings and plastic actions. They played at making contemporary art as if they were celebrating the existence of a dense theoretical corpus. Because access to information was minimal under the government’s strict control, new things were overvalued, and when an artist managed to get a hold of a good art catalog, he or she would quickly and eagerly share it with other colleagues. Some volumes became a kind of Bible for several artist groups.

Becoming a conceptual artist was a joy few could hide. The eagerness to display one’s ideas had no better setting than a party or festival with friends. It is interesting to note how a revolutionary elite, almost a secret society educated in the scientific values of dialectical materialism, would lucubrate about an art that disappeared at the very moment of its creation.

In 1979, on a beach east of Havana, a group of artists got together for a short holiday at a house they illegally rented. Rather than relaxing by the beach, one item on the agendas was to organize a performance festival. Every artist designed an allegorical sign of the work they would produce for the festival. It was called *Festival de la Pieza Corta* (*Festival of the Short Work*), an allusion to the actions. More than six events were scheduled each day. The photographer Gory (Rogelio López Marín) stated he documented the actions,

but the photographs were never printed. The event came to be known in time only through oral testimony.¹

In *Querido Stella (Dear Stella)*, Gustavo Pérez Monzón showed his admiration for the work of Frank Stella in a subtle way. On a piece of striped fabric placed on the floor, he placed an actress whose silhouette he traced on the material using small pins, as if following a sewing pattern. He then very carefully cut out the silhouette and made the actress “disappear” as part of a magic trick. In this way he compared the paintings of the famous artist with industrially printed fabric, playing on the similar sounds of “Stella” and “es tela” (Spanish for “it’s fabric”).

This remains one of the few actions performed by Pérez Monzón in a more or less public space. Gradually, he would retire from the scene until he finally stopped exhibiting his art. Still, there are a few other actions that were not recognized as works by the “author.” Sometimes he would go out to the countryside with his students. He invited friends to intervene in the natural environment and interact with the ecosystem, or he would perform installations and actions in urban settings. One of them was *Dieciocho Días (Eighteen Days)* (1989), curated by José A. Toirac and Tanya Angulo, in which he invited some artists and the public to collaborate in a series of “gatherings” on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays.

During the *Festival of the Short Piece*, the works with social and political content stood out prominently. An example *Alfa Tasgolfo*, performed by Gory and Raúl de la Nuez, after which the artists fled in terror until they were completely out of sight, causing a stampede among the viewers. For their part, José Bedia and Flavio Garcíandia performed *Una noche en la Opera (A Night at the Opera)*, dressing up as security guards who tried to monitor the entrance to a supposed opera—one room in the house—and would ridiculously end up ignored by the public.

Other actions commented on the bad quality of consumer products. In *El Pollo Canadiense (Canadian Chicken)*, Ricardo Rodríguez Brey and Bedia, wearing roller skates, sardonically dismembered a small plastic doll using an axe, an allusion to the paltry chicken rations imported from Canada. And Julio García (Pirosmani) showed the mediocrity of art materials imported from socialist countries by building *Tatlin’s Spiral* using house furniture, only to topple it later as he squeezed a couple of tubes of Old Holland oil paints on his biceps making a body-builder’s gesture.

Avenue 0 (1981)

Leandro Soto was indeed the first Cuban artist to conceive and develop a work as performance in 1979 in Cienfuegos. This is confirmed by Soto’s deliberate choice of medium and his photographic documentation, which he later showed at the exhibition *Volumen I* (International Art Center, Havana) (1981). Soto chose Avenue 0 in the city of Cienfuegos, where he laid out a series of empty tin cans in a geometrical pattern following the cracks on the pavement. In doing so he caught the attention of drivers on the road so they would change their habitual paths. Avoiding

or simply driving over the objects, they also participated in the work of art.

That same year, Soto created works such as *Ancestros (Ancestors)* and *El Hombre y Los Estrobos (The Man and the Oar Ropes)*, which he also presented at the show *Volumen I*. *Ancestros* was noted by the press in Cienfuegos as having “elements that recall Afro-Hispanic culture”.² In Havana, there was an art review entitled “¿Sabe usted lo que es una acción plástica?” (“Do You Know What a Plastic Action Is?”) in which the new medium of performance art was described, and briefly but coherently explained.³

Survival and Sad Opportunities

After the creation of the Ministry of Culture in 1974, many creators who had been silenced for “improper conduct” were granted “pardon.” The potential consequences of such behavior had become clear in the so-called “Quinquenio Gris” (“Gray 5 Years”), and the blueprint for conduct was laid out by the slogan “...Within the Revolution: everything; against the Revolution: no rights...”.⁴

The 1980s began with this well-assimilated dogma. The option was to collaborate with official institutions, despite the fact that officials were not very enthusiastic about foreign ideas and their dizzying adaptation to the place. More than once, the authorities tried to “parametrize” a given artist or event; punitive methods such as leaving the “offender” jobless were used effectively. Consuelo Castañeda remembers the harassment she was subjected to following an innocent action at the UNEAC (Union of Writers and Artists of Cuba) in 1986.

Institutions developed new assimilation strategies responding to the new conditions. They tried to incorporate “problematic” artists by politicizing artistic events or putting forth daring proposals such as *Proyecto Castillo de La Fuerza (Project Castle of the Royal Force)*.

“Tomorrow at 5:30 p.m., at the park on Calzada and D, El Vedado, a plastic action will take place protesting the neutron bomb and showing support for Fidel (Castro)’s speech at the closing ceremony of the Second Congress of the C.D.R.s.”⁵ This is how some of the works of young artists were advertised in the press. The Ministry of Culture, as part of the Government’s Central Administration, attempted to dispel the false image that the artistic avant-garde was linked to the “political vanguard,” a term the government used to define itself, by repeating a formula created by the ideologues of the Revolution in the 1960s. According to this mirage, the artists themselves—who admired the work of Joseph Beuys, Joseph Kosuth, Hans Haacke, Allan Kaprow, Claes Oldenburg or Jonathan Borofsky—would be seriously supporting the congress of such a banal institution as the C.D.R.s.⁶

This new aesthetic trend of thought, which was termed *Renacimiento Cubano (Cuban Renaissance)*, was accompanied by techniques such as installation, performance, and ephemeral or process art. Years later, those same art-

ists would be termed “foreignizing,” “ideologically penetrated,” or simply “mediocre” and “fakers” for applying their knowledge of international contemporary art. The press was used to discredit them, as was the opinion of critics and powerful officials who established harmful criteria and destroyed promising careers.

Three-Dimensional Adventures (1983)

Hexágono, Equipo de Creación Colectiva (Hexagon, Collective Creation Team, 1982-1985), carried out work similar to that of the Dutch conceptual artist Jan Dibbets. Concepts had been assimilated and actions were not considered as the ultimate language anymore. Artists interacted with the landscape, the rhythms of nature, and free will. Their gestures transformed themselves into a fiction that revealed pragmatisms and they used documents to serve as a colophon for their precise intentions while attempting to freeze the passage of time.

During its brief existence, Hexágono produced a small set of beautifully seductive photographs. Rhythms coupled with ideas emerged from these works. Among them, the work of Consuelo Castañeda stands out. She would later promote action and process art among those fortunate to be her students at the Instituto Superior de Arte (Higher Institute of Art). For Antonio Eligio Fernández (Tonel), this experience was crucial for the development of his oeuvre.

Life is Shit and the World is Crazy (1984)

During a decade characterized by the forming of groups and artistic collaboration, Segundo Planes Herrera distinguished himself because of his striking personality. His enormous artistic production (including paintings, drawings and installations) was accompanied by sophisticated plastic actions based on ideas inspired by the legacy of Konstantin Stanislavski (1863-1938). Using an oneiric, at times nonsensical language, the pieces alluded to the best aspects of Dada and Surrealism.

Planes worked on altered states of mind in order to produce visions of a context and of his own self. He dazzled others with his capacity for work and his originality. The formal solutions of his actions had a personal “signature” and were carefully articulated, although he used precarious materials, such as eggs, and scatological gestures involving rotten food, excrement and semen.

Artistic-Sexual Assault (1986)

Decades of interaction with socialism established a behavior that was not accidental. Some ideological-political rituals defined the structure of the works, including performances. Assault was a practice used by the revolutionaries in order to stimulate socialist emulation, a sort of friendly competition among different entities. Without any forewarning, a school could be “assaulted” by students from another school, who would physically invade the facilities and confront the institution, pointing out and criticizing its negative aspects. They would then take their leave, challenging the stunned victims in the midst of the resulting chaos.

Consuelo Castañeda and Humberto Castro did something similar to the above-mentioned action by the Union of Writers and Artists of Cuba when they interrupted a panel of respected theoreticians who were “openly debating” the topic of sex in art. The artists attempted to raise the standards and compete with the organizers by “penetrating” into the lecture room dressed up as a Penis and Vagina, while they squirted a suspicious liquid that looked like milk at the people present there. The gesture went down in history, increasing the proliferation of similar art actions. This readapted “assault” technique became extremely popular at art openings in Havana.

At the same time, Magdalena Campos-Pons exhibited her work *Ritos de Iniciación (Initiation Rites)*, commenting on her own identity and becoming the first artist in Cuba to include video in a performance.

For the Eye that Watches (1987)

Manuel Mendive, an Afro-Cuban man entrusted to his religious spirits, was the most prolific artist of the decade. He developed a personal style in painting, sculpture, and plastic actions inspired in Afro-Cuban culture and nature. His events, in the guise of pilgrimages or set in natural landscapes, are noteworthy.

A memorable event was a mass procession in which the artist and his entourage—made up of dancers, musicians, and animals with whom he would “intervene” using paint directly on their moving bodies—crossed Havana bay in several boats. To the beat of sacred drums, all the participants walked through Old Havana all the way to the National Fine Arts Museum. The action was similar to a carnival procession set to a conga cadence, which used a conceptual language to affirm devotion to the Orishas.⁷

Che Guevara and a Bread and Yucca (1987)

¿Dónde estás Caballero Bayardo, hecho historia o hecho tierra? (Where are you, Sir Knight, Turned into History or Turned into Dust?) was the title of a work by Ariel Serrano presented during an exhibition by Grupo Arte Calle at Galería L. It was a painting on paper of approximately 14 x 16 feet, which reproduced the iconic image of Che Guevara surrounded by the text of the title. It was laid out like a carpet, at the entrance of the gallery, making it difficult not to step on it. Two hours after the exhibit opened, the gallery was full of people and as part of the work, a couple of girls began to perform a lesbian dance. At the end, the paper began to tear and this forced some of the viewers to step intentionally on the image.

Galería L belongs to the University of Havana so the audience was made up mostly of artists and students. One of them, in a rage, asked who the author of the work was. Somebody pointed to Serrano, a scrawny man, who was then attacked with a powerful “pan con yuca” (Cuban expression translating literally as “bread and yucca”).⁸ The aggressor identified himself as a Communist student leader and attempted to shut down the gallery immediately, throw out the visitors, and lock up the members of Arte Calle (ex-

cept for Aldito, the leader, who was not there) in a nearby auditorium, where they improvised a trial that was only the beginning of a Machiavellian harassment.

The director of the special curatorial space, Marta Limia, lost her job after Fidel Castro defamed her in a video shown to members of the Communist Party. The official press also joined the campaign against the artist, and Limia was the object of harassment actions including: the disruption of her home by workers of the city sewage system who dug a deep canal from the street to the last room in the house; the installation of surveillance cameras in front of her home; and repeated visits by security agents. Today, Limia lives in New York. Serrano has not recuperated from the trauma. He fled to Canada and destroyed all traces of the work, refusing to publish photographs of the event. For this reason, the work has not been included in this show.

The Cuenca School (1988)

Arturo Cuenca was a leading theoretician for artists interested in theories of conceptual art during the 1980s. He was a “walking laboratory” that would recycle all events related to art, dance, music, architecture, fashion, and philosophy. Any theme could unleash a passionate debate and thus become a work of art.

In 1989, Cuenca organized an exhibit entitled *Castle of the Royal Force [Science and Ideology]*, a project that used architecture as a metaphor. The building served as a “tolerance zone” where various important political figures were invited to discuss topics selected by the artist/master of ceremonies. Cuenca designed and produced a sophisticated wardrobe with complicated wire supports which he used in powerfully original actions similar to contemporary dance. The event attracted a great many participants who kept the performance active for 30 days.

Echoes of the Golem (1988)

José Luis Alonso Mateo embarked on a practical investigation of his knowledge using ephemeral art and installations. In a series of unpublished photographs from 1988--*The Hair Grows (El Pelo Crece)* and *Pyramids (Pirámides)*--the artist is concerned with the event as the central element. He documents his own time while modifying his context with fiction and poetry in a way that recalls the formalist dialogues of Hélio Oiticica or Lygia Clark, whose work Alonso did not know at the time. In the action *El Eco de Humberto (Humberto's Eco)*, paraphrasing the name of the author of *The Name of the Rose*, Alonso literally launched a new, signed edition of the work by throwing it at the public. This was meant as a humorous commentary on the state of access to information on the island.

Alejandro López is one of the few artists who have continued to work exclusively in the performance genre since the end of the 1980s. The ambition of his projects is obvious from the titles: *The Triumph of the New Hero is Collective* (a phrase of Bertolt Brecht), *Basis for a Theory of the Parapsychology of Art*, *The Myth of the Golem*, *Committee for the Investigation of Historical Phenomena* and *The Force of That*

Divine Breath. For these works, López created elaborate settings, impersonating characters who display an extensive and sophisticated rhetoric and instruct the audience, who are sometimes invited to participate in the actions.

I Don't Exist, Only My Intention Does (1988)

Provisional was a group that was dedicated to performance art. They were provisional members according to the events organized or type of membership, and they collaborated with other artist groups such as Arte Calle, Puré⁹ or individual artists. Dadaist ideas characterized the majority of their works. Politics was a constant topic they approached with a sense of humor. They were chiefly interested in exploring the intentions of the artist and what defined or did not define a work of art.

More than once they were inspired by Alejandro Acosta, a child with a peculiar temperament who showed his natural gifts in two works, *Rock Campesino (Countryside Rock)* and *Japón (Japan)*. *Very Good, Rauschenberg* was an “assault” that interrupted a press conference at the National Museum of Fine Arts. They approached the guest artist, Robert Rauschenberg, with a sign that read: “Very Good, Rauschenberg,” and they demanded his signature. Likewise, they forced him to sign one of the publicity posters with a paintbrush and fresh paint in order to add value to the souvenir.

In close collaboration, Aldito showed up dressed as an Indian and, carrying a bow and arrow, he sat on the floor in front of the guest artist remaining motionless for the entire lecture. He later humorously commented: “Rauschenberg didn't realize what had happened there because he was very drunk, perhaps thinking he was being rendered homage by descendants of real Indians...”¹

Art and Rights in the Street (1988)

There has been some confusion regarding the artist groups Arte Calle and Art.De, partly due to their work methods and organization, the similarity of their names, and to the fact that both groups proposed the street as a privileged space for their work, although with different objectives. Arte Calle concentrates on analytic reflections on art and politics from a revolutionary and rectifying viewpoint, using urban strategies such as graffiti or irreverent attitudes that are typical of gang behavior.

Art.De, instead, used its attitude to define protest rather than aesthetics. The name of the group made this explicit: Art=Arte (Art), De=Derecho (Right, Law). They were a pioneer group in human rights activism on the island, collaborating with Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch. Art.De adopted a dissident position that was unprecedented. Their pictorial works were more like easel paintings, yet they would mix these with transgressive actions in public places. Two members of the group, Marco Antonio Abad and Jorge Crespo, served a two-year prison sentence for some of these events. Juan-Si, the founder of the group, has continued to develop performance art throughout his career.

The second misunderstanding has been to accept that the Arte Calle group only had one intellectual leader, and that

the rest were merely participating performers. Aldo Damián Menéndez López, the charismatic leader of this group better known as “Aldito,” produced significant texts for the murals and original ideas. But the ideas were discussed among all of them. Often, they would collaborate with other groups and independent artists. The resulting work was divided into two important structures: texts that were written on street murals or signs and that employed satanic typographies; and interventions that evoked “bad-painting” and American graffiti, most of which were painted by Pedro Vizcaíno. With time, the members of the group gave more personal emphasis to their works until the group disbanded. Ofill Echevarría, Ernesto Leal, Ariel Serrano and Vizcaíno made their interests clear early on. Aldito also began to distance himself from his leadership in order to do performance art and later embarked on a career as a writer.

Grupo Independiente La Campana (Independent Group La Campana), under the guidance of Carlos Pérez Vidal, developed most of its work in the province of Las Tunas. Based on conceptual or formal interests, the members of this group created installations and performances that emphasized social critique. Because of this, they were dubbed counterrevolutionaries and the authorities—which banned them from working on the streets—persecuted them. In the 1990s, a Spanish-Franciscan priest, who got most of them out of the country, protected them. Armando Martínez Rueda, a member of the group, has been in prison in Cuba since 1995.

Change the Subject, Let’s Talk Ball (1989)

This is a popular expression used when a conversation approaches a touchy subject, as is the case with politics most of the time. This was the new “Alfa Tasgolfo” performed in response to such cultural censorship. Michele Fuentes emerged as one of the most influential “brains” of these like-minded practitioners. Now, however, he hates the technique, and declared that it was Hubert Moreno who organized this playful sports protest. He brought together 35 artists and two art critics who were divided into two teams, Blue and Red. The participants reaffirmed their ideas humorously using sarcasm, but without suspecting that after this gesture, self-censorship would impose itself as the rule in order to remain “in the game,” to paraphrase the words of poet Heberto Padilla. Tania Bruguera affirmed, “The ball game marked a huge change. Up until that time people had been hugely confrontational, but from that moment on, people understood that all possibilities had been exhausted and that they had done all that could and could not be done. It’s finished! Now this is just cynicism...”¹

“Noventoso”: New Art of the Nineties (1990)

“Ochentos” or “ochentiano” (words derived from “ochenta” meaning eighty) are new terms that emerged in Cuba during the 90s to refer to certain aesthetic trends associated with the previous generation. They designate works with an explicit social content, that is politically transgressive, and whose formal structure is not ideally suited to the market. Interestingly, the term is also used when referring to artists or groups working in Cuba today and who include actions or performances as part of their work. In fact this term, rather than defining

aesthetic concepts, marks off historical periods with very different ethics, periods in which a rigorous censorship and an accommodated self-censorship imposed themselves as the credo of the majority.

In May 1990, during the inauguration of *El objeto esculpado* (*The Sculptured Object*), an exhibit that signalled the end of a period when political power and intellectuals attempted an entente, an artist who was not invited to show created a plastic action in protest. In front of his stunned colleagues, who had apparently been seduced by institutions to participate in that show, Ángel Delgado gave the participants small cards printed with the image of a bone, an allusion to the loyalty of dogs, in this case, his art colleagues. Later, in one of the halls of the exhibit, he laid the cards out in a circle, put a copy of the official newspaper *Granma* in the center, pulled down his pants, and squatted, preparing to defecate on the newspaper. The artist Félix Suazo, one of the curators of the project, approached Delgado, attempting to control his instincts. Apparently, his protector did not agree with the title of the work, *La esperanza es la única que se está perdiendo* (*Hope Is the Only Thing that Is Dying*), witnessing the artist’s intention to conclude his bodily statement. Ángel Delgado was convicted for provoking a public scandal and served 6 months in prison.

Most of the artists who remained learned their lesson. The proof is that there have been no repeat offenders. Not only was the “law” persuasive, but also several financial incentives as well as fleeting access to the mainstream that awakened an uncontrollable glamour has clearly delimited “appropriate behavior.”

“...Therefore, those who are unable to understand these things, those who let themselves be tricked, those who let themselves be confused, those who let themselves be stunned by lies, are the ones who renounce the Revolution. What can we say about those who have forsaken the Revolutions, and how should we think about them, except with sorrow? To abandon this country in the midst of this intense revolutionary stir in order to go and plunge in the belly of the Imperialist Monster where the spirit can have no life? And they have abandoned the Revolution in order to go there. They have chosen to be fugitives and deserters of their country. Rather than to be even as little as spectators...”²⁴

Grab your bread!

Glexis Novoa Havana/Miami, April 2007

¹ *Cuban Performance Art of the 80s (Chronology)*, documentary and archival material, © Pan con Yuca, 1998.

² A.I.N. (National Information Agency), cable, Cienfuegos, 03/12/81.

³ Alejandro G. Alonso, *Juventud Rebelde*, Havana, 06/15/1981.

⁴ *Palabras a los Intelectuales (A Word to the Intellectuals)*, Fidel Castro, Havana, June 1961.

⁵ Acción Plástica, editorial, *Juventud Rebelde*, Havana, 11/10/81.

⁶ C.D.R. (Committees for the Defense of the Revolution) Mass organizations in which membership of all citizens age 14 and higher is compulsory. They organize neighborhood block watches in order to “alert” the authorities about any threat inimical to the Revolution. It was founded on September 28, 1960.

⁷ Orishá (also spelled, Orisá, Orisá and Orixá) is a divinity, a chilled and direct manifestation of Olódùnrin (Divinity/God) (or Olódumàrè).

⁸ Like the words “galletas,” “piñazos,” “bufas” or “yetis,” “pan con yuca” (yuca bread) is a popular Cuban martial expression. It is apparently very effective, in relation to some kind of lesson or political punishment.

⁹ Puré (Havana, Cuba 1986-1987). Members: Adriano Buergo (Havana, 1964), Ana Albertina Delgado (Havana, 1964), Ciro Quintana (Havana, 1964), Lázaro Saavedra (Havana, 1964), Emy Taño (Havana, 1964).



THE UTOPIA OF LIVING TOGETHER (IN THESE DAYS) A REFLECTION ON CONTEMPORARY ART IN CUBA, THE ISLAND¹ Yuneikys Villalonga

Sharing Time

Killing Time could have been the title of a Cuban art exhibit in Cuba in the 1980s. The phrase is imbued with the jovial, popular, humorous and ironic spirit of those times. It also (perhaps in the continuous present of action) reminds one of the hyperkinesis that characterized a good deal of the decade's production especially in contrast to the production of the preceding decade.

Much has been said about how the "restlessness" of the group *Volumen Uno*² and the endless actions of artists, then known as "plástica joven," in the second half of the 1980s revolutionized the old structures and trends of Cuban art. One of the most interesting instances of that legacy is the re-examination of Time. In their processes, works of art incorporated a temporal quality when for the first time artists began to speak about "plastic actions" or "performances." But also, some changes in the conception and role of the artist in this period had an impact on his or her time, in contrast to the preceding period, which ends up benefiting art. "In the Cuban seventies there was no such thing as an 'independent artist.' Only later would this category emerge. This was dramatic for artists because time and serenity were foreign realities to them, while also remaining indispensable."³

In a society that names one of its salons, "Art, A Weapon of the Revolution," or that decrees "Negative Tendencies and Errors Correction Process,"⁴ an artist is expected to play an active professional role. The time reserved for creation is "ennobled," it is "justified" not only whenever a work of art with symbolic value for society is produced, but also whenever an artist is seen as an ideological and political agent of change.

Apart from being immersed in a very specific social, political, and artistic circumstance, the discourse of these artists fed on research about international tendencies and concerns, which was primarily disseminated through magazines and catalogs they shared and discussed. Through this channel, the discussion around the mobilizing capacity of art was also activated. "People see in the past what they need from the present," said Lázaro Saavedra about the presence of Joseph Beuys in Cuban art. "Why do we speak about Beuys in the 1980s, if he was a figure that almost goes back to the 1960s? Information-transfer problems? Or is it that certain objective conditions in the art world make it necessary to revisit him [...]?"⁵

However, the artist's independence in the eighties was not entirely consolidated. In this "time for creation," not only was a collective consciousness exercised, but many artists also began to project themselves from within this collectiv-

ity. More or less stable groups proliferated, primarily young art students who had common artistic interests and who came together to show their work or to collaborate for some years. Group experimentation became a learning and exploration methodology to probe all possible limits (art itself and its aesthetics and teaching; social, institutional, and political tolerance). The artist's time is still a shared time.

Although the collective projects were among the most interesting work of the eighties, they have not, for the most part, been represented in the most significant exhibits and collections of Cuban art. This is also true of the section of the National Museum of Fine Arts in Cuba dedicated to that decade; the curators tend to support individual expression and the object.

Part of its invisibility is due to the fact that there was little interest in documenting the actions because they were still not major concerns or because people had little experience with these matters. Some works and authors also did not survive the filter of censorship because they were "diversionist" or "problematic," as they could have been deemed by officials at the time. The documentation of this period reaches new generations of artists and art historians through a scant bibliography, which is often based on the anecdotal. Hence, a mythical or legendary appearance is always accorded to it, which at times tends to distort, hyperbolize or minimize what really happened.

Attempts to maintain this capacity of detecting and "correcting" some of the flaws in the art or the education system, as well as in society as a whole, are recurrent issues in Cuban art. Although the contemporary context is quite different, it is equally complex, and has become changeable and unstable in the last twenty years on the Island. At the various academies of art, within their own studios or homes, some artists have developed a teaching activity based on the principle of collective exploration. Lázaro Saavedra's most recent example of this is his participation in the Collective ENEMA (2000-2003), a group composed of 13 students from the Instituto Superior de Arte (ISA). Their collaboration is closer to the experience of Grupo Puré⁶ than to that of the traditional vertical relationship between teacher and student. The idea here is one of mutual apprenticeship. ENEMA makes a methodological proposal for the study of performance based on the collective interpretation of works from world and Cuban art history. In this way, it supplements its lack of systematic study within the School program. Often, the difficulty of the exercises is "resolved" collectively. It is an interesting discussion that ENEMA Collective is opening up around issues of mass culture as a factor pervading education and life in general on the Island.

On the other hand, Desde una Pragmática Pedagógica (DUPP, 1990-) is a program led by René Francisco Rodríguez, which, since its creation, has brought together several generations of ISA students. DUPP⁷ wants to promote dialogue and exchange between individuals, as well as reviving certain aspects of the art scene, which have been left behind with contemporary trends. For this reason, DUPP has be-

come a platform for exhibits, public interventions, and discussions among a fluctuating group of young people when the formerly enlightening criticism classes⁸ at the institute became more precarious. One student commented about this at end of 1999: “the problem is not in the program, but [...] rather in the form in which it is being solved [...] Something that affects the development of the same is the fact that exercises were postponed without a good enough reason [...] This shows there was no bomb.”⁹ Espacio Aglutinador (1994-) and “Taller de Arte de Conducta” (2003-) promoted other proposals for dialogue and artistic exchange. “Taller” emerged as a pedagogic alternative run by Tania Bruguera, based out of her house on Tejadillo 214 (T214). It is a multidisciplinary two-year training program for young creators, not necessarily from the sphere of the visual arts. The artist collaborates with Cuban and foreign specialists from various research areas who come to Havana to give one-week theoretical or practical workshops. On the other hand, Espacio Aglutinador—not so much as an educational but rather as an exhibition project—has been a platform for “alternative” meetings of artists, critics and curators from inside and outside the Island. In this sense, it can be understood as a collective project initiated by artists Ezequiel Suárez and Sandra Ceballos, continued to this day by Ceballos. Due to its independent stance and because it was free from any kind of non-artistic censorship, Aglutinador has filled important gaps in Havana’s art scene in the last 15 years. It has earned a place as a respected and credible space in art fairs and international events.

The experience of collective work, in its various moments, has played the role of a compass, directly or indirectly, in the research of young artists who come together mostly at the beginning of their careers. Such is the case of Los Carpinteros, Gabinete Ordo Amoris (Institute of Industrial Design), Omarito y Duviél, Soca y Fabián, Jimmi y Wilfredo, Departamento de Intervenciones Públicas (Department of Public Interventions) or, recently, Zenia y Yunior, Luis o Miguel, et al.

The experimental and alternative quality of the collective experience in the history of Cuban art, as well as of the tradition from the eighties, constitutes a legitimating factor for the young artist for this type of work. Actions or group projections, even if almost always short-lived, allow for an easier and better insertion into the complex circuits of Cuban art nowadays. It is worth noting that a larger portion of Cuban art (including criticism and curating) takes place outside of Cuba in art centers, museums, and galleries. Access to these places depends to a great extent on individual efforts, and less and less on state incentives.¹⁰

Attempts to unify or establish alternative spaces for dialogue among the more established artists are, however, scant nowadays. With time, the work of many creators has penetrated a cultural and commercial circuit, both inside and outside the Island—something that allows them to present themselves as small, autonomous institutions, perhaps providing the legitimizing entity that they used to formerly find in artists’ groups.

Memories of the Postwar

At the beginnings of the nineties, the image of the City approached that of a war-ravaged place (in terms of aesthetics but also in terms of the mood). What is known as the “Special Period in Times of Peace,” following the collapse of the socialist camp, became a sign that times were changing. The crisis extended from economics and politics to individual, artistic and societal values as a whole. “Human losses” refer to families and friends who leave, among them, a great number of the artists who were active in the previous decade.

This is how the period appears captured in the two issues of *Memorias de la Postguerra (Postwar Memories)* (1993): an attempt by Tania Bruguera to make Cuban voices come together, which are now scattered throughout various latitudes. The medium is the same that always served as a connection with the outside: the periodical publication. Its visual design and format recalls *Granma*, the official newspaper of the Communist Party of Cuba.

But the project only lasted two issues before it was censored. This reaction was noticeable (as was the need to “play ball,” in 1989¹¹ and Ángel Delgado’s jail sentence following *Hope is the Last Thing We Are Losing* of 1990). There was an obvious divorce between new art and an institutional structure that was no longer able to demand (much less assimilate) a strong and direct critique. The second example, according to Gerardo Mosquera, “...was a clear warning to intellectuals at a time of reactionary clamp-downs. Other surprise performances from the 1980s with a greater political bent would only have been repressed on the spot, without any further, more drastic consequences.”¹²

The vocabulary and language of the art that came afterwards very much resembled that of survival. The artists of that period wrote chronicles, observed with a degree of surprise, were stunned at their immediate situation, which became the object of accusations by the mere act of pointing to it. Commentaries were quickly rid of that “subjective narrator,” who is involved in the social process in order to adopt a certain critical distance vis-à-vis the situation. The arrival of the U.S. dollar and the art market, tourism and the creation of mixed-capital enterprises, the generational gap, and other disasters of emigration were part of this panorama.

In 1991, Fernando Rodríguez conceived a character or heteronym (Francisco de la Cal) who embodied a constant confrontation with the reality of the nineties and the ideals of the early sixties in Cuba. Likewise, Antonio Núñez took an interest in the educational and behavior deformities that were observed in the younger generations. *Niño de Nadie (Nobody’s Kid)* (1997-2005), part of a series of pieces on that topic, compiles images that evoke a loss of innocence.

One of the social functions of contemporary art is to foster a platform of tools that may allow us to confront a new reality, to give a continuity and coherence to a kind of thought, a “common sense” within the reigning chaos, while the gaze becomes more and more personal and introspective.

Carlos Garaicoa's early work is an archaeological exploration of Old Havana, which is entirely in ruins. His in situ interventions point to this state of beauty and deterioration, to the real or potential histories that the accustomed eyes of the inhabitants of Havana forget or overlook.

Based on anthropological research, the work of Ordo Amoris Cabinet stands out for its use of industrial recycling and an aesthetic of the improvisational in popular design as an alternative to material needs. This type of work has been continued to this day, following a variety of paths, by the ex-members of the group, and undoubtedly appears as an interesting reference in the work of the young artist Beverly Mojenas. Her fashion line, *Beverly Top Plastic*, is based on the recycling of plastic bags.

Estira la mano hasta donde puedas (Stretch Your Hand the Most You Can) (1999) is an "extendable" hand that stretches out ten meters. It is part of a series of pieces by José Ángel Vincench, associated with the predictions and advice received during his Santería "consultations." Here Vincench's personal experience alludes to a group of philosophical and existential associations that were active in Cuba at the time.

Another piece that is loaded with self-referential signs used to explore contemporary issues is Jairo Alfonso's *Ejercicio de la Memoria (Memory Exercise)*. This piece creatively weaves instantaneous images from his memory: a trip to the countryside, family memories, childhood icons--all of which are cultural referents for his generation--become tools to approach his reality.

Step by step, artists on the Island begin, in this moment, to integrate their careers within the international art circuit, which requires a surpassing of localism and a move towards a more universal vocabulary of issues. As more and more Cubans take part in exhibitions, fellowships and residencies there is greater interest among international critics, curators, and collectors. This represents new opportunities to occupy a competitive place in contemporary international debates. But these "sparks," at times, are not discernible amid the strong waves of cultural tourism that create a disorderly and naïve art market.

The Turn of Times

The analysis of the issue of time in the contemporary context offers a paradigmatic example that could help explain the new situation of artists in Cuba. This topic, which produced key symbols and icons in the artistic landscape of the nineties--the map of the island, the pier, isolation, the various paths to insanity, and real or imaginary escapes--is no longer approached in such dramatic way. Artists--who now enjoy greater possibilities of exchange with the rest of the population--can experience time associated with family reunifications, economic improvement, professional success, and becoming up to date.

But even if it is now easier to be "up to date," the information that artists have access to is increasingly processed in a more individual fashion. In addition to the lack of spaces for

collective discussion, there are a variety of interests that are difficult to classify into groups or movements in contemporary art. The majority of young artists, when speaking about their own work, cite a number of varied and disparate international references, which are not necessarily part of a collective exploration or concern, as was the case with the references to Joseph Beuys or Joseph Kosuth in the eighties.

Meanwhile, all over the world, local cultural institutions find it increasingly difficult to have continuity in their professional work. A few projects are being formulated abroad nowadays which will unite and systematize information about the work of Cubans on the Island.¹³ However, the work of artists who have left Cuba is still missing from these projects.

It is interesting to note, as a recurrent feature nowadays, the intention of the artists to take advantage of certain "privileges" they enjoy within Cuban society¹⁴ in order to have an impact on it. This allows works to function as a virus or detonator, subverting the functioning or logic of a specific system. The work of T10 (Transfunctional Territory), for instance, is based on the constant transgression of various territories and domains (biological, radio, phone, virtual), using the hacker's abilities under the umbrella of art. According to the artist, these pieces are "time bombs." They are active independent of the public's knowledge, and they open an error gap in the functioning or behavior of these systems. Certain characteristics, such as the generation of a cryptic database language or the capacity to constantly mutate, make it difficult to find the tools to assimilate or "counter" this type of work. We are witnessing here a new kind of activism or an art of resistance.

The "domain" used by Lázaro Saavedra in his project *Galería Imeil (Email Gallery)* is the intranet. He circulates, from one email address to another, pointed comments on recent cultural, social, and political events in the form of text, comic strips, and photographs. Due to the difficult nature of securing internet access in Cuba today, this became a much more controlled and efficient path and a new venue for the publication of alternative opinions. Saavedra restores critical practice and intelligent polemics to a reality that has become highly biased due to the media by using the common sense and popular humor that characterizes all of his work.

One sound piece compiles randomly dialed phone calls in which the duo Luis o Miguel ask the question, "Are you in the Struggle?" The piece works as a necessary alternative census or survey applicable to any contemporary society. The ambiguity and relativity of the formulation easily turns it into something political. The answers function as a thermometer of people's fears and paranoia, as well as of ideological laxity in other large segments of Cuban society these days. This kind of work is similar to the concept *Arte de Conducta (Behavior Art)* proposed by Tania Bruguera. The term emerged from the dissatisfaction with the word "performance" as an action that both artists and the public have managed to objectify and aestheticize. Behavior Art goes beyond the limits of art. It deals with life experiences and its priority is a social function.

According to Bruguera, the Behavior Art Workshop becomes a long-term intervention in the City of Havana. The artist emphasizes the formative strategy based on the acknowledgement of education as a weapon of ideology and power. Alongside official institutions, it has an impact on the development of a new generation of young creators.

Likewise, *CM (Death by Gun after Félix)* by Harold Vázquez provokes a meditation on the topic of the transcendence and anonymity of violent death in the United States. The device translates the statistics of recent research on the subject into real time. It is a kind of simulation (a regressive count which situates the viewer in the supposed moment when the crime is committed), reenacting the phenomenon and its social connotations, which get diluted in the numbers when these types of events are accumulated and serialized.

Other works become a medium to share a particular artist's sensibility, philosophy or individual "truth." Beyond the tone of the historical, political or sociological essay that accompanies an inherited tradition of a marked conceptual nature, often artists propose a visual poetry that is very close to the banal, and apparently is nothing more than something "beautiful," curious, or interesting.

In *Dislexia*, a work by Iván Capote, the viewer must take some time to move through space in order to discover, in the gap opened by a metal arm on a tray with oil, the phrase "Life is a text we learn to read when it's too late." This piece is reminiscent of a series created in 2000 by Inti Hernández in which the artist reiterates a kind of philosophy of life: "Regarding Happiness, the first and last things are to believe in it." Glenda León performs ephemeral interventions on glass from ceilings, windows and doors, using a transparent layer of natural flowers that serve as a filter through which to see reality.

Artists seek a gaze from and towards the individual. They explore moods and social attitudes: stress (Yoán Capote), skepticism (Pavel Acosta), violence, social and cultural aggressiveness and marginality (Alexandre Arrechea, James Bonachea).

On the Island, many political institutions generate ideological saturation: school, work, mass organizations and mass media. Today's civic space resides solely in the individual—the minimum expression of the social structure. Some artists have attempted to rescue a space for civil life in today's society with art that corresponds to the increasing groups of people who share common interests beyond politics and ideology: religion, literature, philosophy, etc. We are witnessing another expression of resistance which, in the Cuban context, is also a sign of the changing times. Meanwhile, for contemporary artists, the sense of generational, social, and cultural belonging—the consciousness of an era—is expanding and transcending the physical space of the Island.

Killing Time

Does it make sense to show a vast sampling of contemporary artists who are identified as "Cuban" on the basis of a link (whatever that may be) with the Island? For Cuban art, such an attempt would contribute positively to an indispensable reconciliation and an opening towards all that has remained on the other side of the ocean (in all possible directions) and to an updating of plural discourses in space (and time). In many cases, the displacement of Cuban artists throughout the world has followed the same course of migratory movements as in any other place on the planet. However, the strong determinism that their art has been (and is still being) subjected to has extra-artistic forms of conditioning. They are ideo-political and are precisely reduced to a matter of borders in a moment when the possibilities for a healthy artistic discussion and confrontation are sorely lacking.

To be a Cuban artist, and present oneself as such, involves having to deal with that view of the Island as one of the political tourist destinations of the world. Nevertheless, one of the many things that we can take advantage of in such a situation is the possibility to venture first into the international, legitimising art circuit, with the hope to one day finally return "home" in order to be accepted as children and—in the best of cases—prodigal ones.

Yuneikys Villalonga Havana, April 2007

¹ The selection for this presentation of contemporary Cuban art is based only on practical matters: the need to provide a complement to the other curatorial perspectives in *Killing Time*; the fact that I'm working on the island, which makes it difficult to systematically follow the practices of other interesting artists outside of Cuba; and the conviction that these practices will nonetheless be represented in this collaboration. The criteria are not in any way discriminatory or due to geopolitical divisions.

² Eleven artists came together in 1981 in order to show their work (although they did not form a group). The show was entitled *Volumen I* and engendered a polemic in the Cuban art scene by introducing a change in visual language and concerns that were similar to those of contemporary international currents.

³ Castro, Elvia Rosa. "Parole, parole, parole" In: *Déjame que te cuente; Antología de la crítica en los ochenta*. CNAP, Artecubano Ediciones, Havana, 2002, p. 9.

⁴ During this period, official discourse urged young people to cast a critical and revisionist eye on the revolutionary process to date (1986).

⁵ Navarro, Desiderio. "Encuesta referente a la recepción de Beuys en Cuba" In: *Kuba OK* (Catalog). Städtische Kunsthalle Düsseldorf, 1990, p. 35.

⁶ Active between 1986 and 1989, this group also included Adriano Buergo, Ana Albertina Delgado, Ermy Taño and Ciro Quintana. Other artists would join occasionally.

⁷ Acronym for "From Pedagogic Pragmatics."

⁸ A subject in the first year, which is based on thirteen creative exercises with a strong conceptual bent assigned to the students and based on the text "On the Manner of Addressing Clouds," by Thomas McEvilley (*Artforum*, June 1984). During the "critiques," interesting reflections and polemics are generated among the students, professors and other artists, critics, aesthetics theorists and philosophers who are invited. These critiques began to decline in the 1990s, primarily because of a lack of (professional and financial) support. This also hampered other work proposals that had certain privileges. Important professors from the preceding decade were lost.

⁹ "En el Ademán de reconsiderar las nubes" In: Magazine *ENEMA*. Instituto Superior de Arte. Year 1, No. 1, Havana, 2000.

¹⁰ Since 1984, the Havana Biennial has played an important role in this sense: it has inserted Cuban art into context of international discourses; it has introduced to Cuba, discourses and debates by an interesting group of professionals from all over the world. However, for various reasons (primarily financial and political), the quality and the possibilities for action have been severely curtailed in the last editions. Other isolated projects constitute only a negligible number.

¹¹ *Todos Estrellas; la Plástica Cubana se Dedicó al Baseball (All Stars: Cuban Visual Arts Play Baseball)*, José Antonio Echevarría Stadium, Havana, 1989.

¹² Mosquera, Gerardo. "Arte Preso". Words about Ángel Delgado's exhibit *1242900*, (Espacio Aglutinador, Havana, 1996).

¹³ A new informative section in the newspaper *Noticias de Arte Cubano (Cuban Art News)* was created. On the other hand, *Proyecto Parábola (Parabola Project)*, sponsored by the Spanish Agency for Culture, publishes texts, biographies, and images from recent exhibitions abroad on the Internet.

¹⁴ For example, the possibility to travel and have contact with foreign countries, the relative ease that one can acquire convertible currency, and the ownership of computers.



TO LIVE SURROUNDED BY WATER

Papo Colo

Departure:

To live surrounded by water is to live the fantasy of leaving, of escaping beyond the horizon, of rediscovering what you already have, of being born again in a new land. The history of the world is a history of migrations, starting from our own departure from Africa millions of years ago to today when the Tower of Babel is erected anew in every city.

Island:

On an island, it is easier to notice and feel the symptoms of culture and of the things that make up a country. Insularity hermetically encloses its politics, language, and customs, isolating it from other worlds, which can be an advantage or disadvantage, according to its use and development. Intense nationalism produces a particular culture, but also develops a psychic authoritarianism in the dominant groups; each island/country-territory becomes the center of the world.

This geographical narcissism acts as the creative engine of its culture and the concept of its foundation. This also happens in large countries/territories and countries/empires, but on an island the cultural/political mechanism is more obvious. On an island, there's no room to hide in the shadows.

History or destiny teaches us that some countries/territories become more and others less powerful. Aesthetic rules are set by the dominant culture; any evolution against them will be devoured by seduction or by force. Globalization proves this fact—the local is global, but the global belongs to those who invent the system of economic production and distribution, and to whom the symbols of culture also belongs. Global culture has a first and last name. We know alternative cultural forces exist, which are not aligned or developing, but those are assigned a minor role or limited importance.

Military, political, and cultural appropriation is the natural instinct of any territory/country, but neighbors protect themselves against isolation, mistrust, and diplomacy in order to avoid war. Art tells us everything because its task is to assimilate history, so that there is no limit to culture despite censorship. What is difficult and wise lies in the balance of the influential forces of creation and where reason abides.

Geopolitics:

The Cuban imagination is the creator of its revolution and of its Diaspora; art functions like the archive of its history. As in all cultures, its cryptic and chaotic narrative begins to transform and depict a revolutionary and reactionary body that evolves towards the unknown. I imagine what Cuba will be before and after its Revolutions. I ask myself what path its creativity, its ingenuity, will follow. Trying to understand and analyze this is one of the main objectives of this show. That's what art is for, after all, to understand other cultures and light the path to our future.

Formerly and subsequently, the Antilles have been overseen by the dictatorships of Spain, the United States, and ourselves. The Antilles was the point of arrival for the discovery of the New World, the first point of contact, the first symptom of hybridity in the new continents. The syncretism of the Americas and its conquest began here, and continues in our genes.

Geography:

The Antilles have a volcanic geography, we are the dried-up tips of volcanoes. The winds blowing from Africa converge in the Atlantic to create hurricanes and enter the Caribbean. We are the gateway of the winds and Africa goes through us every year before reaching the United States, a physical and destructive journey that reconstructs our fear.

The formation of our island is the transformation and the transit from the Old to the New World. The Antilles, the first experiment, its first evolution, its miscegenation, a foretaste of what we now call multiculturalism. The Antilles are an archipelago in the Caribbean Sea. As a totality, the Caribbean is more complex and made up of more territories than most of us imagine. It is our Mediterranean, the Antilles are the boundary between the Atlantic Ocean and the Caribbean Sea, the border between North and South America.

Climate, time, work:

Heat induces idleness, which is the privilege of killing time in a fun way.

It's better to kill time because in the end time kills us. Artists are the masters of idleness—they can spend the whole day with a piece of paper and a pencil and create a unique vocabulary. Let us remember that whoever creates a language, invents a way of life, so idleness—which is a way of planning boredom—is the most creative form of concentration, because it kills time in order to produce more time in another dimension and in other ways of life.

Artists have the power to turn everything into a part of their game, because they build their worlds according to their specific imagination. Artistic concepts are those that history will absorb the most. Visual and written poetry are, in the end, the narratives that will be studied in the future (or visual and written poetry are, in the end, the narratives where the future can/will be studied).

We know about the powerful through what their moment in history tells us. We know Don Quixote and Cervantes, not the rulers of their day, Plato and Aristotle, not the emperors of their time. Picasso is much more popular and influential than Franco, and Duchamp will always be studied more than De Gaulle. Neruda will always be with us, whereas Pinochet will become a military mummy. And such is the history of the power of imagination, which is more enduring than the power of political and military administration.

It seems to me that the idleness of the artist is the invisible machine that moves history. Artists are the spiritual historians of territories, and of the actors that occupy them tempo-

rarily. Artists know the fiction of immortality well. That is why they create a reality based on fiction in order to articulate truth. In the end, they are historical chameleons, tricksters who create and recreate the world from their own vantage point, contemplating it in their moments of idleness, to kill their time and multiply the emotions of their Testimony.

Show:

In this show, both you and I, without going to Cuba, learned about this island, because the artists who live its reality narrate it in a visual, conceptual, synthetic, and poetic way. We must keep in mind that most of this art was created by artists who were born during the socialist revolution, a regime that emerges out of a neocolonial dictatorship, and then becomes an authoritarian communist regime. Under this regime, art must be produced in accordance with the political ideas of a ruling elite, who defines what art is. For artists who don't believe in the regime, the only alternative is to go into exile or lead a double life.

Cuban artists survive these obstacles using the imagination of a double artistic reading. One idea situates them in what I call Conceptplus, which goes beyond conceptual art, a movement invented by the French and exploited by the Americans, British, Germans, Italians, and all other countries/territories who follow them in the queue of the art world. Nowadays I am unable to view conceptual art without thinking about advertising and the market. One hundred years after its birth, conceptual art has become an advertising cliché whose purpose is to persuade and promote economic investment in art.

Artists, who don't belong to the elite nations mentioned above, have to move beyond that notion of conceptual art. Cuban artists, as well as Latin American artists, live in a cultural duality that carries their sensibility into various dimensions. They live an internal diaspora and an external one. They are, for the most part, economic orphans. They are relegated to a secondary place by the global powers of the cultural world.

That is how the necessity of Conceptplus art emerged. It was born from a vision that is independent of these forms of power and out of the need for the local to become global.

This show offers education, history, and the confirmation of the will of Cuban artists moving in this direction. Due to a number of reasons— isolation, the embargo, repression, economic conditions and conditional freedom—these artists have survived and have managed to develop their vocabularies. Cuban artists have made art with the materials available to them, which are not many. From the perspective of art history, this fact situates them in the *arte povera* tradition, a relative of conceptual and surrealist art, but, as opposed to their European or North American confreres, Cuban artists do this out of a real necessity and not as a capricious or rebellious attitude towards consumerism. **THEIR DISCOURSE IS THE AESTHETIC OF NEED**, the urgency to reinvent themselves with limited resources, the Cuban way. What is subversive in their art is the history of their Revolution, their exile, their contradictions, and what these artists have been able to make of all this with the time that has been given to them, or has been

stolen from them. These artists have taken the evolution of their Revolution and have built their future. We know that all destinies are original and that you kill time as the measure of your trajectory. **THEIR ART IS THE RECUPERATION OF THAT TIME** in order to create another time because the discourse of the Revolution is worn out after half a century of political fundamentalism.

The ingenuity of Cubans is legendary, and it will be difficult for the effort and prowess of an authoritarian revolutionary regime (a leftover from the Spanish, American and Russian military) to become diluted through the unbridled consumerism of its other capital, Miami. It remains to be seen how its determination and will to be independent will develop in its relation with the power of the North, which has always been a love-hate relationship, as is the case with the rest of our Antilles.

This show is a conceptual portrait that has taken decades to develop. Its virtue lies in the seductive power of the unknown. We know very little about what really happens or has happened on the island. The world sees Cuba as an invisible and incomprehensible zone, a location for recreation and political tourism, an off-limits area, a subversive place one has to forget and ignore... in the meantime.

I hope you felt inclined to get to know it, as an illegal piece of airmail art jumping over the fence of the physical and mental blockade that shortsighted bureaucrats on both sides have imposed. I hope this show produces intellectual transparency, showing that artists belong to a country, but are also masters of the world.

Exit Art showed these works with the goal of getting to know our Antillean neighbors better, because they too make up a large portion the population of New York and the United States. It is an open secret that the United States is a bilingual and bicultural country. Spanish is not an invading language—it has been present from the foundation of the Americas. Just like the English, the Portuguese and the French, all Americans have two hearts, and these languages are their future. Every political situation is in a state of transition; languages, on the other hand, are like artistic techniques. They change, are translated, and survive. Art is committed to telling stories from various perspectives. Its purpose is to show all the sides of truth and to flow to the end of a story we still don't know completely.

This show is an artery of the Cuban Heart opening up in New York. Cuba, a heroic and historical transformation in our America—or, as others would have it, a missing link in democracy—is nevertheless the largest of the Antilles and part of the cultural and linguistic bilingualism of North America. "English only" is también español. No artist knows what the Americas of the future will be like, what we do know is that nothing in this world lasts forever, and that immortality will end up disappearing with the cosmos.

Papo Colo
Manhattan, April 2007



UNA INTRODUCCIÓN OPORTUNA

Elvis Fuentes

En junio de 2005, a raíz de recibir un premio de curaduría en la Bienal de Artes Gráfica de Ljubljana, aproveché esos quince minutos de fama en tierra eslovena para proponerle una exposición de arte cubano a Aleksander Bassin, director de Mestna Galerija (Museo de la Ciudad). Aceptó y nos pusimos manos a la obra. Así surgió *Lista de espera (Waiting List)*, la primera versión menor del presente proyecto.

Decidí desarrollar un tema que me interesaba desde 2001 cuando trabajé documentando la Colección Ludwig de arte cubano, cuyo núcleo se encuentra en el Forum Ludwig de Aquisgrán, Alemania. Revisando la colección me percaté de la ausencia de obras de arte-proceso y de colectivos, que fueran tan comunes en la década de 1980.¹ Tampoco había documentaciones de performances y proyectos efímeros, algunos de los cuales eran obligada referencia cuando Ludwig comenzó a adquirir arte cubano, como los trabajos pioneros de Leandro Soto, Hexágono, los grupos Puré y Provisional o el archiconocido “Juego de pelota”.² De manera que este coleccionismo, que marcó la pauta dominante a la entrada del mercado de arte en Cuba desde comienzos de los noventa, iba en sentido contrario a estimular propuestas experimentales, efímeras y críticas.

La censura oficial se agravó a raíz de sucesos que estremecieron la escena artística a finales de los ochenta.³ La destitución de funcionarios que defendían la autonomía de los creadores y su derecho a expresarse libremente, el ostracismo contra los artistas y su virtual expulsión hacia el destierro fueron algunos de los rasgos que caracterizaron la situación durante la última década del siglo.

Lo curioso es que muchos de los nuevos artistas seguían produciendo obras de vanguardia en la isla. El espíritu innovador había sobrevivido bajo las nuevas circunstancias, en buena medida gracias a la labor de profesores que sirvieron de puente entre generaciones, como Lázaro Saavedra, René Francisco Rodríguez, Tania Bruguera y Sandra Ceballos. Los artistas jóvenes respondieron a la censura y el mercado del arte fortaleciendo sus propuestas con estándares de rigor que le dieron entrada al circuito internacional. Además, fuera de la isla surgían voces nuevas dispuestas a contraponer una imagen diferente de la tradicional conservadora del arte cubano del exilio. Artistas de vanguardia como Ana Mendieta, José Bedía y Félix González-Torres se convirtieron en modelos influyentes.⁴

Matando el tiempo explora esa línea de continuidad y discontinuidad existente entre tres generaciones de artistas, una de las cuales reside mayoritariamente fuera del país desde hace más de una década. La excusa temática ha sido el tiempo con sus variadas nociones asociadas con las prácticas experimentales del arte, como lo efímero, lo provisional, lo trascendente, entre otras. Para actualizar la escena artística de la isla invité a la curadora Yuneikys Villalonga. Entonces surgió la idea de ir más allá de

consideraciones estéticas y ampliar el espectro hacia lo económico, sociológico y político, sumamente importantes para comprender el fenómeno cubano a cabalidad. Más tarde, al conocer la investigación realizada por Glexis Novoa sobre el performance en Cuba en la década de 1980⁵, presentada en la galería del Miami Dade Community College en 1998, a invitamos a integrarse al equipo y conformar una sección especial dentro de la muestra.

Cuando Ben Rodríguez-Cubeñas supo de este proyecto, inmediatamente ofreció su apoyo desde Rockefeller Brothers Fund y Cuban Artists Fund para traerlo a Nueva York y es el principal responsable de que este haya sucedido. Asimismo, los directores de Exit Art, Jeanette Ingberman y Papo Colo, abrieron las puertas de esta institución al proyecto y lo adoptaron como propio al punto de estimularnos a ampliarlo, en especial en lo referido al arte del performance, de acuerdo con la tradición del espacio. Les agradecemos mucho, al igual que a su equipo de trabajo: Sarah Ryhanen, Mary Katherine Matalon, Bryan Mesenbourg, Jodi Hanel, Audrey Christensen, Fawad Khan y otros.

¿Por qué el tiempo?

El 13 de marzo de 1957 un grupo de estudiantes de la Universidad de La Habana protagonizó una acción muy audaz: intentó liquidar al gobernante de entonces, Fulgencio Batista, en el Palacio Presidencial. Simultáneamente, un segundo grupo tomaba por asalto la emisora Radio Reloj, la cual alternaba noticias y anuncios comerciales con la hora oficial. Los estudiantes buscaban cambios en el terreno político y, simbólicamente, detener el reloj de Batista mientras proclamaban su ajusticiamiento. El ataque fracasó y los estudiantes fueron asesinados. Pronto la resistencia universitaria adoptó como nombre 13 de marzo, para rendir homenaje a las víctimas.

La importancia de esta fecha no reside en el resultado de la acción, sino en su simbolismo y la manera en que, con el tiempo, adquirió otros significados. Durante las décadas de 1970 y 1980, 13 de marzo pasó a ser el concurso universitario por excelencia de artes plásticas y otras manifestaciones. El lugar donde se libraba la nueva batalla era el arte, entendido como “un arma de la Revolución”. Más tarde, en 1994, la fecha se resignificó y convirtió en símbolo de tragedia. Un remolcador llamado 13 de marzo fue ocupado por decenas de civiles para emigrar a los Estados Unidos. Al ser hundido por un guardacostas cubano, causó la muerte de muchos tripulantes, incluidos varios niños. Tras este incidente comenzó la llamada Crisis de los balseros. Miles de personas abandonaron la isla en botes improvisados y balsas precarias. Se desconoce el número de personas que murieron en la travesía hacia costas de los Estados Unidos.

El artista Saidel Brito recogió este momento con la estremecedora instalación *Trece* (1995), compuesta por trece coronas funerarias colocadas en el piso de la galería, como si flotaran sobre el agua. En una pieza anterior, Brito había utilizado una estructura similar, pero en un tono menos grave, incluso festivo. *Emigración Voisin* (1994) consistió

en varias cabezas de vacas –hechas en barro- colocadas sobre el piso formando una larga fila como si se tratara de un rebaño atravesando un río. El artista ironizaba sobre las condiciones de vida del cubano ilustrando una frase popular –“con el agua al cuello”-, que quiere decir muy malamente. Sin embargo, en apenas un año la ironía cede ante la tragedia. Las trece coronas funerarias sustituyeron las cabezas de ganado para simbolizar los miles de emigrantes muertos en el mar, especialmente aquellos del remolcador 13 de marzo hundido el 13 de julio de 1994.⁶

Pero volvamos a la acción de 1957. “Detener el reloj de Batista” implicaba una intervención en el tiempo de la isla, que fue consumada al arribar al poder la Revolución de Fidel Castro. 1959 se convirtió en el Año 0 del nuevo Calendario cubano, a medida que el gobierno comenzó a nombrar los años en referencia a las metas autoimpuestas o al tiempo transcurrido desde su ascenso: “Año 10 del triunfo de la Revolución”, “Año de la Industrialización”, “Año 30”, “Año 31” y así sucesivamente.⁷ Además, un poder que reescribía la historia necesitaba fijar nuevas fechas y rituales conmemorativos. Cada 31 de diciembre el país recibía la aurora del año nuevo con un mensaje de Fidel Castro transmitido por todas las emisoras radiales y televisivas. Cada 26 de julio era precedido por febriles actividades constructivas en alguna provincia elegida para celebrar sus progresos el “Día de la Rebeldía nacional”. Cada año, abril entonaba un canto de victoria sobre el “Imperialismo yanqui” en Playa Girón –mucho más agradable al oído que Bahía de Cochinos. El tiempo fue, pues, una obsesión revolucionaria.

El “Salonismo” de 1970

El factor “tiempo” es clave para entender el arte contemporáneo internacional. Las demandas de una economía de la creación –léase también: tiempo, trabajo y materiales- por el modo en que se organizan los calendarios del arte, estimulan la adopción de procedimientos que se asemejan a las fórmulas academicistas. Ciertos manierismos predominan en el quehacer artístico dependiendo del circuito de circulación para el cual se produce. Recursos como la serialidad, la repetición y la recolección son atajos muy transitados en la concepción formal y estética de estas prácticas. De igual modo, se reciclan algunos temas clichés de lo contemporáneo, como la relación entre lo público y lo privado, el mapeo de prácticas sociales y culturales más o menos exóticas y el uso de simbologías de materiales. No pocas veces el arte se somete a una función meramente ilustrativa de estos temas.

En Cuba la década de 1970 produjo numerosos manierismos promovidos desde el aparato institucional. El Concurso 13 de marzo era considerado uno de los mejores entre decenas de eventos similares a lo largo del país. Los salones provinciales, nacionales, de organizaciones de masas e instituciones oficiales–algunos de corte temático- proliferaron desde el archiconocido Salón 70, que presentó a los primeros artistas formados bajo la Revolución como “La Generación de la esperanza cierta”.⁸

Los salones y concursos tuvieron al menos dos efectos en el arte de la isla: propagaron un tipo de exposiciones de carácter “populista”, consistente en el panorama, es decir, en mostrar colectivamente–y a menudo de forma acrítica- toda suerte de producción artística; y dieron pie a la creación de obras basadas en temas preconcebidos, a menudo desligados de la poética de los artistas. Este fenómeno ha sido denominado “Salonismo” por la crítica cubana.

Al efecto de los salones se sumaron las condiciones de trabajo de los artistas, que en su mayoría cumplían funciones sociales–enseñaban en escuelas, desarrollaban talleres en instituciones culturales y fábricas, diseñaban libros para editoriales y escenografías para el teatro-, por lo que contaban con escaso tiempo para desarrollar una obra personal. De manera que una parte considerable del arte del período está marcado por la contingencia y por la prisa de cumplir a tiempo con un plazo de admisión.

Patrones temporales

Las marcas temporales son recurrentes en el arte y a menudo incorporan a la obra una dimensión narrativa sutil. Intervalos, resistencia y durabilidad; fechas, efemérides y anacronismo, así como los objetos referidos al tiempo, son todos pretextos para abordar otros asuntos. Por ejemplo, en San Francisco, California, Tony Labat convirtió su taller en un gimnasio de boxeo por un año, tiempo en el cual debía entrenar para convertirse en un boxeador profesional. *Combate: un romance práctico* (1978) fue una indagación sobre la ansiedad competitiva que culminó con una pelea real de la cual quedaron una serie fotográfica y un lienzo con el sudor y la sangre de las heridas del artista.

César Trasobares extrajo del tiempo un personaje típico, la Quinceañera, que podía acompañarle en acciones (*Performance sin invitación*, 1978) o servir de motivo en instalaciones y series fotográficas. Por su parte, José Toirac y Tanya Angulo integraron al artista conceptual Gustavo Pérez Monzón en una exposición–diálogo con otros creadores por un período de *18 días* (1989), lo que dio título al proyecto. Mientras tanto, Alonso Mateo registró con su cámara fotográfica el crecimiento del cabello en su cabeza rapada en *El pelo crece (autorretrato)*, de 1989, y Juan-Si González sometió su cuerpo semidesnudo y pintado de nubes a la contaminación urbana; permaneció en un cruce de calles congestionado por el tráfico vehicular de La Habana hasta que sintió los síntomas del desmayo, en *Un día cualquiera* (1987).⁹

Al situar doce camas configurando un gran reloj analógico en los jardines del Instituto Superior de Arte (ISA), Segundo Planes recurre a una imagen más gráfica, que aun conserva el carácter de acción en *Asesinando lo onírico* (1983). Más objetuales son los trabajos de Consuelo Castañeda, *Retrato de mi madre y yo* (1988), con la inscripción de la fecha de nacimiento de ambas sobre una lámina de acetato utilizando cabellos; y el escudo de Rafael López Ramos referido humorísticamente a una *Jornada de la Cultura cubana* (1989-2007). Rigoberto Quintana ha utilizado el formato del

calendario repetido para denotar una obsesión del exilio: la muerte de Fidel Castro (*Calendario cubano*, 2007).

Cultura del récord

El gobernante con más tiempo en el poder, contra el cual se han planificado más asesinatos,¹⁰ casi 50 años de oposición al imperialismo, medio siglo de Revolución en las narices del “vecino del Norte”. En efecto, Cuba ostenta varios récords Guinness. Ahí están el discurso más largo en la historia de la ONU –de Fidel Castro, claro está–, el tabaco de mayor longitud,¹¹ la vaca que más leche ha producido en un día,¹² la mayor simultánea de ajedrez, la mayor duración en control y pateo del balón.¹³ En una sociedad que luchó por erradicar los “rezagos” del capitalismo, persistió sin embargo esta cultura del exceso y del récord.

Siguiendo esta “tradición”, la exposición *Matando el tiempo* reúne una cantidad récord de artistas cubanos contemporáneos (más de 80), incluidos varios grupos que disparan la cifra de “beneficiados” a casi un centenar. Es cierto que no todo lo reunido aquí son obras, pues una buena parte es documentación de obras efímeras, intervenciones y performances, pero esas también cuentan. Las piezas han viajado desde La Habana, Miami, Chicago, Los Ángeles, San Francisco, Phoenix, Carolina del Norte, Ohio, Vancouver, México, Puerto Rico, Madrid, París, Atenas, Zurich, Colonia y, claro está, Nueva York. Algunas constituyen verdaderas proezas individuales o colectivas.

Por ejemplo, se presentan bocetos y documentación de la escultura efímera *Contenido neto: 2000 kg de jabón rosa* (1997), de Francisco Lastra Adorno, realizada en el Museo Universitario del Chopo, en México D.F. En esta obra, Lastra parodió la cultura del récord al reproducir a tamaño natural el legendario yate Granma,¹⁴ construido con una estructura de hierro y dos toneladas de jabón de color rosa. El artista comentó a los medios que la obra buscaba ser inscrita en los Record Guinness como el barco más grande realizado en jabón (originalmente serían cinco toneladas).

Por su parte, el performance *Record Güines* (2000), de Enema, un colectivo formado por trece artistas, consistió en un recorrido en bicitaxi del famoso percusionista cubano Tata Güines desde la ciudad de Güines hasta La Habana. Los miembros del grupo condujeron el vehículo por turnos. Enema responde irónicamente a la noción del esfuerzo extraordinario como valor en sí. En otras ocasiones reinterpretaron performances clásicos de resistencia corporal desde esta perspectiva del esfuerzo compartido.¹⁵ Paradójicamente, un artículo publicado en la revista *Enema* en 2000, defendía la idea del trabajo como valor artístico y algunos miembros, como el dúo El Soca & Fabián, han recuperado esta noción al crear un dinosaurio con patas y alas de insectos. Esta “adicción” al trabajo es asimismo palpable en las esculturas formadas por legiones del personaje de Francisco de la Cal, el campesino ciego creado por Fernando Rodríguez y en los dibujos de Joel Rojas realizados mientras esperaba por compradores en la Plaza de la Catedral.

La generación de Puré

Como portavoces de una sociedad formada y dirigida por obreros y campesinos, los artistas de la “Generación de la esperanza cierta” representaron la nueva realidad productiva de la obra de arte mayor: la epopeya revolucionaria.¹⁶ El “Salonismo” propició una imaginería de los verdaderos “artistas”: mártires, guajiros (campesinos), constructores, macheteros e incluso científicos y cosmonautas, caracterizaron la década de 1970 y parte de la siguiente.¹⁷

A mediados de los ochenta, se produjo un cambio en el acercamiento al tema del tiempo. Poco antes se habían producido renovaciones fundamentales en la escena del arte: de tipo estético con la exposición *Volumen I* (1981), que marcó la puesta al día del arte cubano en cuanto al uso de lenguajes y medios experimentales como el performance, la instalación y las intervenciones efímeras; de tipo institucional con el surgimiento de la Bienal de La Habana y el incipiente desarrollo de un mercado para el arte cubano en Occidente, parte de la estrategia de proyección internacional del Ministerio de Cultura; y de tipo ideológico con la propagación de algunas concepciones tomadas electivamente de las teorías postmodernas, que se divulgaban desde la revista *Criterios*, editada por el políglota y ocasional “performero” Desiderio Navarro. Las condiciones eran propicias para el desarrollo de una nueva sensibilidad artística que se afincó en el arte de acontecimientos, experimental, efímero, desenfadado y a menudo crítico.

La nueva generación respondió al reclamo de la oficialidad de una participación más activa en el llamado “Proceso de rectificación de errores y tendencias negativas” (1986)¹⁸ exigiendo una mayor presencia en los proyectos importantes y el “relevo” de la “vieja guardia”. Para ello, propusieron una renovación estética cuya fuente estuvo en la cultura popular urbana y marginal. Fue común la conformación de grupos, que organizaban eventos de intervención pública y, desde el punto de vista de la creación, el uso de recursos como el reciclaje, la apropiación, el pastiche y la parodia, que habían aprendido de maestros como Flavio Garcíandía y Consuelo Castañeda. El grupo fundador, Puré, apenas dejó rastros documentales de sus proyectos, pero impusieron un modo de hacer arte que se difundió gracias a miembros y admiradores.

Jornada productiva

La construcción es más que un trabajo; es el esfuerzo colectivo de materialización de la utopía, el progreso y el desarrollo. Por eso fue un tema recurrente desde que Leandro Soto produjera esculturas con materiales precarios y fotografías en *Kiko constructor* (1983). Los artistas absorbieron otros elementos de la cultura productiva –símbolos, instrumentos y técnicas– y los subordinaron a sus poéticas personales.

Por ejemplo, Carlos Rodríguez Cárdenas produjo un celebrado autorretrato *Yo no existo, solo mi intención* (1987), en el cual su cuerpo aparecía como un edificio de ladrillos teniendo por corazón una casa. También realizó performances como obrero de la construcción que daba toques

finales – “repellando” unas serigrafías que representaban muros de ladrillos- mientras distribuía *Originales fáciles de adquirir* (1988). Rodríguez Cárdenas creó murales y pinturas que parodiaban los slogans oficiales, en algunos de las cuales utilizó la imagen del hombre-edificio, un signo distintivo de su trabajo.

El hombre-edificio es probablemente la metáfora más sofisticada del arte cubano en relación al concepto del “hombre nuevo” promovido por los ideólogos de la Revolución. Sin embargo, la procedencia del motivo, salido de la obra de un artista crítico, dio al traste con cualquier aprovechamiento apologético del mismo. Pronto tomó otras variaciones cuando el sistema social que representaba se desplomó a finales de la década de 1980. Entre las transformaciones que este hombre-edificio ha sufrido destacan las surgidas de la experiencia del destierro: hombre-barco, barco-isla, hombre-faro y hombre-puente.

Por su parte, Alejandro López creó el personaje de Super A, un superhéroe de casco blanco, que aun hoy en Nueva York pronuncia discursos basados en teorías filosóficas y científicas desde lo alto de enormes estructuras fortificadas. Los discursos de Super A son una parodia de la crítica predominante desde mediados de los ochenta, caracterizada por el abuso de la terminología proveniente de la estética, la filosofía y otras ramas del saber.

Metamorfosis (Microbrigada) (1992), de Lázaro Saavedra, es una serie de pinturas sobre su traumática experiencia de “inmersión” por un año en una microbrigada (1989). Esta es una forma colectiva de autoayuda creada en 1970 con el objetivo de permitir a los trabajadores construir su vivienda. El amauterismo de los integrantes determinó la pésima calidad de las edificaciones y pronto el modelo fue minado por la holgazanería, la corrupción o la intervención del Estado, que podía disponer de las viviendas arbitrariamente. Desde el título mismo, Saavedra compara su experiencia con la de Gregorio Samsa, el personaje de *La metamorfosis* de Franz Kafka. Las doce escenas desbordan sarcasmo; alternan imágenes icónicas de la historia del arte con situaciones francamente absurdas y no por ello menos reales.

Años después, Henry Eric y Producciones Dobocho retrataron la realidad de las microbrigadas desde la perspectiva de un grupo de miembros en el documental *Almacén* (2001). Y curiosamente, en Puerto Rico Charles Juhasz-Alvarado crearía una ficción sobre cierto artista que voluntariamente habría dedicado parte de su tiempo ayudando en la construcción de un *Museo de Arte* (2000), que eventualmente albergaría sus obras, solo para comprobar que los obreros hacían de todo menos trabajar.

A inicios de los noventa la construcción dio paso a la ruina y el escepticismo. Si el proyecto pedagógico *La Casa Nacional* (1991), de René Francisco Rodríguez, ayudaba a personas pobres a reparar sus casas, las obras “arqueológicas” tempranas de Carlos Garaicoa (*Gran Hotel, 39, Homenaje al Hotel San Carlos, de 1991*) eran solo intervenciones urbanas para destacar un elemento distintivo

de su pasado en los edificios en ruinas. El espíritu había muerto. Quizás deba señalarse como único continuador a Henry Eric, cuyos proyectos en escuelas y en los cementerios católico y judío de La Habana y Guanabacoa, consistieron respectivamente, en reparar baños y construir urnas funerarias y una tumba para difuntos de familias pobres.

En 2004, el dúo Atelier Morales visitó y fotografió 25 ingenios azucareros emblemáticos del siglo XIX, que fueron representados por artistas viajeros europeos. La serie se convirtió en una denuncia del abandono y desmantelamiento del patrimonio nacional cubano.¹⁹ Humberto Planas ha realizado esculturas con encofrados en espacios exteriores simulando la construcción de monumentos o estructuras solo para desarmarlas y dejar en el público expectante el sinsabor de la ilusión, mientras Alejandro González ha documentado los proyectos inconclusos de edificaciones en el barrio capitalino de Alamar, otrora símbolo del progreso revolucionario.

Descanso sobre la hierba

La premiación del esfuerzo sobrehumano es la expresión más acabada de una cultura de la explotación disfrazada como cultura del trabajo. Esto tuvo su momento más crítico en la década de 1970, a raíz del fracaso de la Zafra de los 10 millones, es decir, la búsqueda de un récord. Los domingos se declararon “rojos” y se compulsaba a obreros y estudiantes a realizar “trabajos voluntarios”. Las vacaciones “eran para las vacas”, pues se enviaba a los estudiantes a realizar labores en la agricultura. Se impuso la exaltación del obrero ejemplar en la figura del “Vanguardia nacional”, que dedica su tiempo libre a la obra de la Revolución. Los que se integraban a este proceso podían recibir recompensas: el derecho a comprar un automóvil o un televisor nuevo, un apartamento en un edificio de microbrigadas recién construido, un viaje por toda Cuba y más allá.²⁰

Probablemente la crítica más frontal a esta manipulación de la cultura del trabajo por el poder la realizara el artista conceptual Arturo Cuenca en 1989. Luego de varios episodios de censura de los que fueron víctimas los grupos que realizaban acciones en la calle, surgió la idea de convertir *el Castillo de la Real Fuerza* en sede de las discusiones ideológicas más polémicas. Cuenca percibió este gesto como una real demostración de fuerza y reaccionó a ello, aunque de forma bastante críptica, en su exposición *Ciencia e ideología*. En este proyecto, la fortificación se convertía en la obra misma, un escenario que exploraría, mediante acciones, foros y debates, la relación entre el arte y el poder –entendidos en términos de ciencia e ideología– con respecto al trabajo. En el texto del catálogo, Cuenca identificaba la ciencia como “la legitimación del trabajo a nivel social como momento teórico”, mientras que la ideología era “la legitimación del poder del no-trabajo”, “falso conocimiento, pseudosíntesis que legitima el no-trabajo de la clase dominante”. Así, la ideología era practicada por “las tropas buro-transportadas de los ideócratas” y el poder era “sólo el fatuosma de un preciso castillo”. Y terminaba exclamando: “Viva el poder del trabajo”. Al identificar a los

ideólogos con los burócratas, Cuenca no hacía otra cosa que señalarlos como los verdaderos enemigos del proceso de rectificación.²¹

También bajo las circunstancias del exilio, los artistas han efectuado denuncia de la explotación laboral ligadas a la experiencia migratoria y la discriminación sexista. El video-performance *Dolores de 10 a 10* (2001), de Coco Fusco, narra como una trabajadora es forzada por su supervisor a firmar la renuncia sin que haya sido remunerada por su labor. Fusco simula un video de seguridad tomado por el circuito cerrado de televisión de la fábrica. La pieza está basada en hechos reales. Por otro lado, Maritza Molina realiza fotografías y videos en los que “trabaja para el hombre” como cuando tira de una carreta cargada de ejecutivos (*Acarreando tradiciones*).

Otra línea igualmente crítica de la retórica productivista dentro de la Revolución, aunque tangencial, fue la que surgió del tiempo libre. La música y los bailes pop fueron temas especialmente atractivos para los artistas jóvenes. Desde mediados de los setenta, Flavio Garcíandía celebraba el descanso y la relajación en la pintura *Todo lo que usted necesita es amor* (1975), que representa a la pintora Zaida del Río tumbada sobre la hierba.²² La obra utilizaba como título la traducción de una canción de The Beatles, cuya difusión estaba prohibida por entonces en la isla. Una década más tarde, Glexis Novoa y el Grupo Cívico organizaron una especie de competencia de breakdance (*Al final todos bailan juntos*, 1986).²³

Ahora bien, la codificación del tiempo libre ha sido diversa. En el año 2001, Antonio Núñez presentó una instalación consistente en una serie de pequeños catres de los utilizados en los círculos infantiles a la hora de la siesta. Sobre la tela imprimió en serigrafía imágenes aterradoras: niños sin rostro, padres con cabezas de lobo, niñas con cuerpos adultos erotizados y extraños. Núñez imaginaba el sueño de los niños cuando eran forzados a dormir la siesta y alegorizaba el sueño de una generación joven, obligada a vivir la utopía de sus mayores. El tiempo del descanso se convierte aquí en tiempo de la opresión.

En otra dirección iba Galería DUPP, un grupo de estudiantes de arte tutorados por René Francisco Rodríguez, cuando realizó un proyecto de intervención en la tienda por departamentos *La Época* (2000) al identificarla como “sustituto” del Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, entonces cerrado por renovación. “Las tiendas están formando el gusto de la gente. Muchos van allí como irían a un museo: para ver y no tocar”, comentaba DUPP. Es curioso que *La Época* haya acogido este proyecto, mientras el Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes sigue ignorando la tradición del performance en la isla. Después de varios años de permanecer cerrado, el Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes reabrió en 2001, mostrando parte de su colección permanente de arte cubano desde la Colonia hasta la actualidad. No se incluyó nada relacionado con esta manifestación.

De la diversión a la subversión

El origen del performance y otras manifestaciones del arte efímero y conceptual en Cuba ha estado asociado con la recreación. Por ejemplo, el primer evento de arte de performance, el *Festival de la Pieza Corta* (1980), tuvo lugar en una casa en la playa habanera rentada por los artistas durante un fin de semana. En él se presentaron obras de numerosos artistas trabajando en colaboración y combinando elementos *kitsch* y teatrales con acciones y textos. También ligado a este espíritu estuvo Hexágono, un grupo creado durante unas vacaciones en 1982, que produjo obras efímeras como intervenciones en el paisaje.

Debido a este origen “ocioso” del performance en la isla, Glexis Novoa lo ha categorizado como “jodedera”, un término popular para designar una acción desenfadada y sin la gravedad que se le otorga en otros lugares. Este sería, en opinión de Novoa, el sello distintivo del performance cubano.²⁴ Esto se observa también en la obra de artistas residentes fuera de la isla, como César Trasobares en Miami, Tony Labat en California, Carmelita Tropicana en Nueva York y Félix González-Torres en su etapa temprana en Puerto Rico. A la Quinceañera de Trasobares y la pelea de boxeo de Labat, se suman las personificaciones de González-Torres como turista, en al menos dos performances realizados entre 1982 y 1983; asimismo, Carmelita Tropicana asume desde su propio nombre una identidad ligada al entretenimiento – el mítico cabaret habanero Tropicana- y encarna un personaje en deuda con el vernáculo: Pingalito Betancourt.

Por cierto, este rasgo de “levedad”, no impedía tratar temas de peso. De hecho, el más divertido de los eventos, *Todos estrellas: la plástica joven se dedica al béisbol: Por la Recreación, la Educación física y el Deporte* (1989), conocido como “El juego de pelota”, fue también el más subversivo.

Sin embargo, existe un núcleo de artistas que se acercaron al medio con un tono distinto. Por ejemplo, Leandro Soto, Ana Mendieta y Manuel Mendive al referirse a rituales de la herencia afrocubana en los ochenta; Tania Bruguera cuando retomó la obra de Ana Mendieta después de su muerte prematura o las obras de referencias feministas de Coco Fusco, Maritza Molina, Cristina Padura y el Grupo 609. Tampoco los trabajos de María Magdalena Campos Pons, Juan-Si y el dúo de El Soca & Fabián en los Estados Unidos, así como Ezequiel Suárez, Tania Bruguera y artistas jóvenes salidos de su Cátedra de Arte de Conducta, que abarcan temas relacionados con la antropología, la política y el arte mismo. Por último, regresando a la década de los ochenta, Juan-Si y Jorge Crespo en el grupo Art.De, el grupo independiente La Campana y Ángel Delgado, quienes realizaron acciones de carácter político controversial.

A medida que los artistas se volvieron “serios” y realizaron críticas al gobierno, fueron catalogados como “pseudoartistas”, una táctica de descrédito común entre funcionarios de la cultura. Lamentablemente, algunos escritores extranjeros sirvieron de portavoces a esos funcionarios. En su libro sobre el arte cubano del período, Luis Camnitzer citaba a

“personas del arte que presenciaron los eventos” (de Ritual Art.De), que “encontraron una ausencia notable de mérito artístico”.²⁵

En respuesta a criterios similares, La Campana organizó *Académica* (1989), una exposición y performance en la cual los miembros del grupo presentaban obras de corte académico y asistían a la inauguración vestidos de cuello y corbata –un atuendo extraño en la isla, asociado con la burguesía. Joel Rojas, por su parte, fue expulsado del ISA por realizar un retrato satírico de Fidel Castro y fue calificado por el propio Ministro de Cultura como pseudoartista y “enemigo”, lo que le cerró las puertas de las instituciones en el país. Durante unos meses realizó pinturas rupestres en una cueva en las afueras de La Habana mezclando referencias icónicas de los aborígenes con motivos de la propaganda política. Al cabo, regresó a la ciudad y sobrevivió pintando cuadros para el mercado de turistas en la Plaza de la Catedral.

Debido al prejuicio existente sobre el “mérito artístico” y a la persecución a que fueron sometidos, estos colectivos se desintegraron y nunca recibieron atención.²⁶ En esta exposición se muestran por primera vez obras originales y documentaciones de trabajos de la época, que permitirán destruir ese mito.

Retazos de vida

En 1979, Leandro Soto comenzó una serie de performances o “acciones plásticas”, como les llamaba entonces. *El hombre y los estrobos* (1979) tuvo lugar en una playa de Cienfuegos al anochecer. El artista realizó varios arreglos de sogas viejas sobre un fragmento de vela que había recogido del mar. De esta manera, Soto representaba metafóricamente la belleza y la memoria de objetos usados y envejecidos por el agua.

El envejecimiento y la muerte es un tema presente en obras de otros artistas, como Consuelo Castañeda en una instalación fotográfica que muestra partes del cuerpo desnudo de su madre a los setenta años [*Un libro de 70 páginas* (1988)]. Asimismo, en la serie de piezas de Ramón Williams, padre e hijo, que muestran la sorpresa del primero frente al mundo del arte y su cuerpo inerte, visto con la mirada compasiva e incluso festiva del segundo, como descubre el título de *Heart Art Attack*. Por último, la muerte pasa a un segundo plano en las trece coronas funerarias de Brito –para dar paso a la protesta- y en las intervenciones en cementerios de Henry Eric, que construyen monumentos para gente común y sirven de alivio ante la pobreza mayor, la de la desmemoria.

De la pobreza material y la riqueza humana habla el trabajo temprano del desaparecido grupo Gabinete Ordo Amoris²⁷, en la exposición *Agua con azúcar* (1996). Los objetos funcionales que reemplazan otros objetos son una respuesta categórica a la carencia y la crisis; traen a colación la “estética de lo provisional”. Dos íconos logrados por Ordo Amoris años después incluyeron un taxi-limosina construido con dos autos Lada –de este modo el transporte personal-

izado del taxi se colectivizaba- y las antenas realizadas con todo tipo de materiales reciclados en un momento en que el gobierno perseguía a quienes intentaban burlar el cerco informativo utilizando ilegalmente antenas parabólicas para ver más allá de los dos canales de la Televisión cubana.

Ernesto Oroza continuó las investigaciones sobre el tema de la provisionalidad y desembocó en los conceptos de “desobediencia tecnológica” y “arte de la necesidad” sobre los cuales ha publicado extensamente. Por ejemplo, una de sus series recoge los múltiples usos que se ha dado al motor de lavadoras Lampika: ya sea para construir un ventilador o para motorizar una bicicleta. Las joyas realizadas con metales innobles y cristales baratos abren la puerta al lujo con lo que es su antítesis: el reciclaje.

El trabajo del Gabinete Ordo Amoris preparó el camino para artistas más jóvenes como Beverly Mojena, cuyas ropas, calzados y accesorios construidos a partir de bolsas de plástico recicladas, acarrear connotaciones ligadas a la cultura consumista de los centros comerciales, una nueva realidad en la isla desde la década de 1990. Francis Acea revisita el motivo de la antena convirtiéndola en un emblema de triunfo en los años dorados del exilio (2006).

Muchos artistas han tratado el tema de la pérdida por la migración y el exilio. Liudmila Velasco y Nelson Ramírez de Orellano desarrollan un proyecto mediante el cual van documentando las casas de los amigos que solían visitar y han abandonado el país como marcando parcelas de un vasto territorio que van perdiendo cada vez. Algo similar simbolizó Ezequiel Suárez cuando realizó el performance *Cada artista que se va es un pedazo que se pierde* (1995), en el cual golpeaba desde un andamio el techo y las paredes del Espacio Aglutinador –entonces su casa-, provocando pequeños derrumbes de fragmentos del edificio.

Juan-Si González aborda el tema de la ausencia mediante un proyecto performático de base geográfica, *Looking inside for Cuba*, que le lleva a visitar pueblos llamados Cuba en varios estados de los Estados Unidos. Por su parte, José Ángel Vincench expone las tensiones entre el adentro y el afuera en *Zoom In o Dr. Jekyll y Mr. Hyde* (2000), un collage de fragmentos del periódico *Granma* e imágenes de la televisión extranjera mostrando opositores pacíficos dentro de la isla.

Antes y después

Como en la publicidad de cualquier producto de belleza, la propaganda política revolucionaria nos enseña que después es siempre mejor. Esa marca temporal en Cuba es 1959. Los materiales educativos, reportajes televisivos, radiales y de prensa escrita, películas, libros y demás medios muestran a las generaciones jóvenes los cambios producidos desde entonces y comparan las maravillas de la nueva era con las penurias del régimen anterior. De un pasado codificado como vergüenza solamente se salvaron los arranques exorcistas al estilo del 13 de marzo. En este proceso se reescribió la historia con su nuevo repertorio de efemérides, conmemoraciones y homenajes.

Como lógica contraposición, el exilio formado por varias comunidades en Miami, Nueva Jersey, Puerto Rico y España, entre otros lugares, ha preservado la memoria anterior a 1959, aunque no de modo uniforme, y escribe su propio calendario de hechos desde entonces hasta aquí con el mismo celo que lo haría una dictadura. Fe de ello da el proyecto *Momumento Bahía de Cochinos (Bay of Pigs)*, de George Sánchez-Calderón, realizado para conmemorar el intento de los exiliados cubanos por derrocar a Fidel Castro en 1961. El artista realizó su homenaje en el hangar donde fueron recibidos los sobrevivientes por sus familiares al regresar de la isla. Reprodujo en miniatura todos los aviones utilizados en la acción y los colocó en vitrinas. Otras secciones de la pieza consistieron en una instalación dentro de un furgón²⁸ y la decoración de una puerta con luces. Por último, produjo un enorme inflable de más de treinta pies representando un cochino rosado con rostro furioso que volaba por encima de los espectadores. El inflable provocó la reacción airada de algunos veteranos que vandalizaron la instalación acuchillando el cochino y destruyendo aviones y vitrinas. Un comentarista político de la radio local afirmó que el animal debió tener una barba (en referencia a Fidel Castro) para que no hubiesen dudas de quién era el cochino.

Bajo estas complejas coordenadas temporales han crecido las tres generaciones de *Matando el tiempo*. Los mayores vivieron las últimas décadas de la Guerra Fría, con su cacería de brujas y “parametrizaciones”. Los más jóvenes apenas han experimentado el episodio de Elián González, el niño balsero rescatado en las aguas de Miami y devuelto a Cuba. Todos han sido marcados por un tiempo histórico que se ha convertido en un tiempo de espera, aburrimiento, observación y ansiedad, como en las obras de Alonso Mateo, Pavel Acosta, Glenda León y Yoan Capote; un tiempo que ha llevado a la ambigüedad del grano de maíz de Rubert Quintana en *Toda la gloriosa del mundo* (1999): ¿floreCIMIENTO o explosión? Quizás suceda como en la sentencia de la obra *Dislexia* (2003) de Iván Capote: “La vida es un texto que aprendemos a leer demasiado tarde”. Si aprendemos alguna vez a ver el texto, leer los signos y adivinar la muerte, la única que tiene el tiempo a su favor.

Elvis Fuentes Guttenberg, New Jersey, Abril de 2007

¹ Salvo tal vez las de ABTV y del dúo René Francisco y Ponjuán, que dialogaban con el arte soviético de la Vanguardia y del Realismo socialista. Tampoco la exposición *Kuba O.K* (Kunsthalle Dusseldorf, Alemania, 1990) incluyó performances.

² Las documentaciones de performances iniciales de Soto están trabajadas como collages con textos que las convierten en obras únicas, apetecibles para cualquier coleccionista. Asimismo, Hexágono produjo un cuerpo de obra fotográfica sumamente atractiva en sus interacciones con el paisaje. El Juego de pelota fue documentado por el fotógrafo José A. Figueroa, una figura prominente en el medio en la isla. La colección Ludwig, asesorada por especialistas de prestigio, cuenta con una enorme colección fotográfica y de obras experimentales. Sin embargo, perdió de vista esta importante zona del arte cubano contemporáneo.

⁴ Aunque Ana Mendieta falleció en 1985, su contribución se hizo más visible a nivel internacional en los 90s.

⁵ Cuban Performance Art of 1980s (The Chronology), Miami Dade Community College Gallery, Miami, 1998.

⁶ Trece aludía también a la superstición popular de la mala suerte y al ritual que cada año se celebra en la isla para recordar la desaparición del Comandante Camilo Cienfuegos en octubre de 1959. En dicha actividad, niños de todas las escuelas echan flores al mar, donde supuestamente, según la versión oficial, debió caer el avión que lo conducía de Camagüey a La Habana. Debido a las extrañas circunstan-

cias en que sucedió su desaparición y al hecho de que nunca se encontraran restos del avión, muchas personas desconfían de la versión oficial.

⁷ También la Revolución francesa de 1789 intentó renovar el tiempo creando el Calendario de la República Francesa y durante la Comuna de París de 1871, los rebeldes disparaban contra los relojes y retomaron el mismo calendario.

⁸ Eran los recién graduados de la Escuela Nacional de Arte (ENA), fundada en 1967 y exhibían con los maestros de las generaciones vanguardistas de los treinta y los cincuenta.

⁹ El recurso del intervalo se ha vertido en otras manifestaciones como el cine con la película *Suite Habana* (2005), en la que Fernando Pérez presenta un día en la vida de varias personas.

¹⁰ 638 intentos, según Fabián Escalante, antiguo jefe de la Seguridad del Estado (“The Castropedia: Fidel’s Cuba in facts and figures”: *The Independent*, Londres, 2007).

¹¹ En el habla popular “tabaco” significa “discurso”. Es decir, Cuba ostenta los dos tabacos más largos del mundo.

¹² Ubre blanca, cuya muerte en 1985 mereció un obituario en el periódico *Granma*. Se intentó clonarla fallidamente en 2002.

¹³ No importa que el equipo de fútbol sea pésimo, estos récords son amasados con fruición por la propaganda porque constituye el logro de un individuo dentro de un sistema colectivo.

¹⁴ Yate utilizado por Fidel Castro en su expedición contra el gobierno de Fulgencio Batista en 1956.

¹⁵ Por ejemplo, permanecieron amarrados por una soga a la cintura por una semana en lugar de un año y sostuvieron en los brazos un bloque de hielo hasta que se derretió, pero alternadamente para evitar daños físicos. Las obras se refieren los performances *El año de la soga* (1983-1984), de Linda Montano-Tehching Hsieh, en el que permanecieron atados por una soga a la cintura durante un año y un performance en que Marina Abramovitz sostiene un bloque de hielo en sus antebrazos.

¹⁶ Rafael Rojas ha estudiado el complejo de culpa de los intelectuales al no participar en la lucha revolucionaria contra Batista y la cesión del reconocimiento de “artista” al revolucionario, en el ensayo *Tumbas sin sosiego*, Alfaguara, 2006.

¹⁷ En la televisión, un dibujo animado titulado “Mi papá es tuerquista” descubría a los ojos de un niño cuán imprescindible era el oficio de su padre, pues sin tuercas se desarmarían los automóviles, se caerían los puentes, las industrias y hasta los satélites espaciales.

¹⁸ El “Proceso de Rectificación de errores y Tendencias negativos” fue una campaña política oficial lanzada por Fidel Castro en 1986 como una respuesta a las reformas iniciadas por países socialistas como Polonia, Checoslovaquia, Hungría, Alemania de Este y la Unión Soviética. Su propósito fue combatir la burocracia, ineficiencia, corrupción y muchos otros “errors”. Castro pidió a la nueva generación que fuera porte activa de este proceso criticando los problemas. Inspirado en una caución de Carlos Vasela que hablaba del pedido del hijo de Guillermo Tell de tomar la ballista, esta generación fue llamada “Los Hijos de Guillermo Tell”.

¹⁹ En 2004, el gobierno desmanteló 70 ingenios azucareros destruyendo una parte considerable del patrimonio industrial del país. Tal vez esta decisión se tomó ante la perspectiva de que en una transición hacia la democracia, estas propiedades fueran devueltas a sus antiguos dueños. Con esta medida se condenó a numerosos pueblos que tenían su base económica en el azúcar a una existencia fantasma.

²⁰ La televisión recogió esto con un programa de entretenimientos –9550: el nombre se refería a los kilómetros que separan La Habana de Moscú-, en el cual se regalaba al ganador un viaje a la Unión Soviética, que era como decir Utopía (eso del “Paraíso terrenal” era demasiado religioso), un lugar lejano y extraño, pero alcanzable. El programa desapareció inmediatamente después del derrumbe socialista marcando la temporalidad inherente a toda Utopía. Poco años después, a raíz de los tratados migratorios entre Cuba y Estados Unidos negociados tras la Crisis de los Balseros, se estableció la Lotería de Visas, a la que aplican anualmente cientos de miles de familias con la esperanza de emigrar legalmente al “Norte”.

²¹ En una caricatura de Raúl de la Nuez, publicada en la revista *América Latina* (no. 12, Diciembre de 1988), aparecen igualmente tachadas la representación de un imperialista (un hombre portando un garrote y un sombrero con la bandera norteamericana) y la de un burócrata (un hombre sentado frente a un buró con un teléfono y un gran cuño).

²² La representación social del artista en el cubano promedio, incluyendo los funcionarios de dependencias culturales, claro está, seguía siendo la del “zángano”, es decir, la de personas que no trabajaban y pasaban la mayor parte de su tiempo en fiestas y alejados del ciclo social productivo. Por eso la pintura de Garciandía era doblemente subversiva, con respecto a la retórica revolucionaria y al estereotipo.

²³ Estos bailes en los que el cuerpo se contorsionaba eran considerados por la prensa oficial como productos de una decadente sociedad capitalista.

²⁴ En décadas posteriores, otros artistas pueden servir para confirmar esta aseveración, como los colectivos Enema y Dupp, el dúo de Omarito y Duvier, James Bonachea, entre otros.

²⁵ Camnitzer, Luis: *New Art of Cuba*. University of Texas Press, Austin, 1994, p. 188.

²⁶ Algunos miembros de Art.De y La Campana fueron encarcelados. Actualmente Armando Martínez Rueda, miembro del segundo grupo, permanece en prisión desde 1995.

²⁷ El Gabinete Ordo Amoris estuvo formado inicialmente por Manuel Piña, Juan Bernal, Ernesto Oroza, Francis Acea y Diango Hernández, quedando los dos últimos como únicos miembros entre 1997 y 2003. Piña es el primero en separarse del grupo antes de la exposición *Agua con azúcar*. Le siguen Bernal en 1996 y Oroza en 1997.

²⁸ Osmani Cienfuegos, hermano del fablecido Camilo Cienfuegos y Ministro del Turismo, ha sido reinaldo como responsable por esta tragedia. Esta corado con Marcia Liseica, la ex vice ministra de cultura, que fue despedida por defender a las artistas reve Francisco y Ponjuán(1989).



LA CONSAGRACIÓN DE LA JODEDERA: ORÍGENES DEL PERFORMANCE EN CUBA

Glexis Novoa

Kokoriokos & Kakafuakos (1970s)

Samuel Feijoó (San Juan de Las Yeras, 1914-1992) fue un artista que dejó una peculiar influencia en sus colegas. Fue editor de dos revistas de arte, *Islas* (1958) y *Signos* (1969), dedicadas a promover la literatura y el arte primitivos, así como los mitos y tradiciones de la cultura popular campesina. Su talento y personalidad son legendarias y en sus acciones muchos artistas descubrían ideas relacionadas con el arte de los eventos. Feijoó ilustraba sus intervenciones públicas con un espíritu dadaísta, a manera de happenings. El público esperaba ansioso de ver lo que traía en su inseparable “jaba” o bolsa, de la cual sacaba cualquier objeto (zapatos, boniatos, piedras) para argumentar una opinión o defender una tesis.

Benjamín Duarte (Caonao, 1900-1974), otro activo colaborador de *Islas* y *Signos*, realizaba eventos para los cuales se vestía de colores específicos, que a su vez definían la coloración de la comida que preparaba y digería en el acto. Es curioso que muy lejos de este contexto, en el París de 1971, el artista catalán Antoni Miralda (Barcelona, España, 1942) eligiera el mismo motivo para realizar una de sus acciones, *Ritual en Cuatro Colores*.

Guayacón fue un artista primitivo poco conocido. Durante los años 70s hizo obras que podrían considerarse como arte de participación o performances. *La Bomba Fría* consistió en una serie de explosiones de carburo, producidas por una escultura en forma de mortero, que el propio artista hacía detonar frente a la estación de bomberos de Cienfuegos a manera de protesta. *La Quema de Hatuey* (1987) fue otra escultura hecha en madera y cera, que el artista incendió durante la apertura de una exhibición colectiva. A medida que se derretía la estatuilla, que representaba al mártir indígena, se vertía un líquido pestilente -que aparentaba ser orina-, como un gesto irreverente ante los convencionalismos del arte. El evento concluyó con un grupo de bomberos protagonizando la tarea de controlar el desarrollo de una obra de arte-proceso.

Aldo Menéndez (1948, Cienfuegos), artista y promotor cultural, recuerda que acompañaba a su cercano amigo Feijoó en la manipulación del orden y la reinstalación de bostas de vaca en el campo a finales de los 60s, mientras comentaban la acción, asumiendo que participaban en una obra de arte. (Años después, Menéndez organizaría una exhibición colectiva a manera de acción plástica, *La obra llega después de usted*, en Galería Habana (1982). En ella los artistas traían e instalaban sus obras el mismo día de la inauguración, al propio tiempo que llegaban los invitados.)

Partiendo de ejemplos como éstos, podemos identificar a Samuel Feijoó como un precursor de las acciones plásticas. Incluso Leandro Soto, a quien se reconoce como el pionero del género, afirma que la obra de este artista fue

una temprana referencia dentro de su formación como artista del performance.

Feijoó mantuvo contacto con artistas como Jean Dubuffet, de quien recibía información y conceptos sobre diferentes corrientes de la Vanguardia, que a su vez difundía a través de sus publicaciones. En ellas se citaban ideas y obras de André Breton, Francis Picabia, Max Ernst y otros muchos, a la vez que se promovía el valor del arte popular que brotaba espontáneamente de mitos y leyendas sobre güijes, jigües, madres de agua, kokoriokos y kakafuakos.

La Pieza Corta (1979)

Algunos pioneros del performance en Cuba reconocen sus primeras obras como “jodederas”, una expresión popular que se refiere a una acción realizada con singular desenfado, humorística, la cual admite cualquier tipo de informalidad; algo parecido a bailar en una conga, donde todo puede suceder. El característico desparpajo isleño fue constante en aquellos eventos. Incluso artistas que hoy se toman su carrera con seriedad, admiten esa informalidad en las acciones de entonces. La ausencia total de un mercado de arte hacía que los artistas no se preocuparan por transformar sus actos en objetos, ni siquiera existía la preocupación por conservar un documento. Se trabajaba pensando en un momento fugaz, donde la urgencia por lo enunciado era lo fundamental.

A principio de los 80s, artistas e intelectuales se reunían para “jugar” con la codiciada información de vanguardia. Esta incluía temáticas como Instalaciones, Postmodernismo, Conceptualismo, Performance, Fluxus, Happenings y Acciones Plásticas. Jugaban a hacer arte contemporáneo como si celebraran la existencia de un pesado cuerpo teórico. Debido al mínimo acceso a la información, controlado celosamente por el gobierno, se sobrevaloraba lo nuevo y cuando algún artista lograba apoderarse de un buen catálogo de arte contemporáneo, no tardaba en pasarlo a varios colegas, quienes lo compartían ávidamente. Algunos volúmenes se transformaban en especie de “Biblias” para los diferentes grupos.

Convertirse en un artista conceptual era una dicha que pocos podían ocultar. La urgencia por exponer sus ideas no encontraba mejor espacio que una fiesta o un festival entre compañeros. Es curioso como una élite revolucionaria, casi una cofradía secreta, educada con los valores científicos del materialismo dialéctico, elucubraba un arte que desparecía justo en el momento de su creación.

En 1979, en una playa al este de La Habana, se reunió un grupo de artistas para pasar unos días de vacaciones en una casa alquilada ilícitamente. Uno de los planes, además de disfrutar de la playa, fue organizar un festival de performances, para el cual cada artista diseñó un cartel alegórico a la obra que produciría. Se llamó *Festival de la Pieza Corta* –aludiendo a la duración de las acciones y se realizaron más de seis eventos en un día. El fotógrafo Gory (Rogelio López Marín) ha afirmado que documentó las acciones, pero las fotos nunca fueron impresas. El testimonio oral se impuso a través del tiempo como única referencia.¹

En *Querido Stella*, Gustavo Pérez Monzón mostraba su admiración por la obra de Frank Stella de una manera muy sutil. Sobre una tela a rallas colocada en el piso, acostó a una actriz cuya silueta marcó en la tela por medio de pequeños alfileres, como si fuera un patrón de costura. Recortó con extrema precisión la silueta e hizo “desaparecer” a la modelo como si se tratara de un acto de magia. De este modo, comparaba las pinturas del famoso artista con telas seriadas impresas en una fábrica, aprovechando la similitud fonética de “Stella” y “es tela”.

Esta obra ha quedado como una de las pocas acciones realizadas por Pérez Monzón en un espacio más o menos abierto. Paulatinamente se iría retirando de la escena hasta dejar de exponer su arte. Aun así, se conocen otras acciones que no fueron reconocidas como obras de arte por su “autor”. A veces salía al campo con sus alumnos, invitaba amigos a intervenir en la naturaleza e interactuar con el ecosistema o realizaba instalaciones y acciones en ambientes urbanos. Una de ellas fue *Dieciocho Días* (1989), curada por José A. Toirac y Tanya Ángulo, en la que se invitó a algunos artistas y al público a colaborar en especie de “tertulias” los martes, jueves y sábados.

Dentro del Festival de la Pieza Corta, las obras de contenido social y político ocuparon un lugar importante. Un ejemplo fue la singular contraseña de escape, *Alfa Tassogolfo*, realizada por Gory y Raúl de la Nuez, tras la cual los artistas corrieron despavoridos hasta perderse de vista y provocaron una estampida entre los espectadores. Por su parte, José Bedia y Flavio Garcíandia, interpretaron *Una noche en la ópera*, encarnando a corpulentos agentes de seguridad que intentaban controlar la entrada a una supuesta ópera —una habitación en la casa— y terminaban ridículamente arrollados por el público.

Otras acciones comentaban la mala calidad de los productos de consumo. En *El Pollo Canadiense*, Ricardo Rodríguez Brey y Bedia, montados en patines, descuartizaron sádicamente con un hacha una pequeña muñeca de plástico, aludiendo a la raquítica ración del pollo importado de Canadá. Y Julio García (Pirosmani) mostraba la mediocridad de los materiales de arte procedentes de países socialistas al construir una “Espirale de Tatlin” con los muebles de la casa, para luego derribarla mientras apretaba sendos tubos de óleo holandés, que derramaba sobre sus bíceps con gesto de exhibicionismo físiculturista.

Avenida 0 (1981)

Sin lugar a dudas, Leandro Soto es el primer artista que concibe y desarrolla una obra como performance en 1979, en Cienfuegos. Lo confirma la consciente elección y utilización del medio con una extensa documentación fotográfica, que exhibió dos años más tarde en la legendaria muestra colectiva *Volumen I* (Centro de Arte Internacional, La Habana) (1981). Soto eligió la “Avenida 0” de esa ciudad, donde colocó una serie de latas de conserva vacías en disposiciones geométricas, que se relacionaban con los trazos formados por las uniones del pavimento. Así, llamaba la atención de los conductores que transitaban por la avenida, induciéndolos a cambiar el curso rutinario. Evi-

tando o simplemente arrollando los objetos, consumaban su participación en la obra de arte.

Ese mismo año, Soto realizó obras como *Ancestros* y *El hombre y los estobos*, que también presentó en *Volumen I*. La documentación de *Ancestros* fue resaltada por la prensa cienfueguera por “elementos que recuerdan la cultura Afro-Española”.² En La Habana, apareció en una crónica de arte titulada *¿Sabe usted lo que es una Acción Plástica?*, en la que se definía la técnica utilizada como “Performance”, y se incluía una breve, pero coherente explicación del novísimo medio de expresión.³

Supervivencia y tristes oportunidades

Después de la creación del Ministerio de Cultura en 1974, se “perdonó” a muchos creadores, que habían permanecido silenciados por “conductas impropias”. Las consecuencias de dichas conductas habían quedado claras en el llamado “Quinquenio Gris” y la pauta de comportamiento la dictaba la célebre frase: “...Dentro de la Revolución: todo; contra la Revolución ningún derecho...”.⁴

Los 80s comenzaron con este dogma bien asimilado. La opción era colaborar con las instituciones oficiales, a pesar de que sus funcionarios no mostraran mucho entusiasmo hacia los conceptos foráneos y su vertiginoso aplanamiento. En más de una ocasión, se intentó “parametrar” algún artista o evento; métodos paliativos como dejar sin trabajo al “infractor” eran eficaces. Consuelo Castañeta recuerda el acoso que sufrió después de una acción que realizara en la UNEAC (Unión de Escritores y Artistas de Cuba), en 1986.

Las instituciones desarrollaron nuevas estrategias de asimilación de pensadores y artistas plásticos a la altura de las nuevas condiciones. Intentaron incorporar a los “problemáticos” politizando los eventos artísticos o aventurándose en propuestas como el *Proyecto Castillo de La Fuerza*.

“Mañana, a las 5:30 p.m., en el parque de Calzada y D, El Vedado, comenzará a desarrollarse una acción plástica para condenar la fabricación de la bomba de neutrones y apoyar el discurso de Fidel (Castro) en la clausura del II Congreso de los C.D.R.”.⁵ Así se anunciaba en la prensa algunas obras de los artistas jóvenes. El Ministerio de Cultura, adscrito a los Órganos de la Administración Central del Estado, pretendía promover la falsa imagen de que la vanguardia artística estaba ligada a la “vanguardia política”, como se definía a sí mismo el gobierno, repitiendo la fórmula que desarrollaron los ideólogos de la Revolución durante los 60s. Según este espejismo, los mismos artistas que admiraban la obra de Joseph Beuys, Joseph Kosuth, Hans Haacke, Allan Kaprow, Claes Oldenburg o Jonathan Borofsky, se tomaban en serio el congreso de una institución tan banal como los C. D. R.⁶

El nuevo pensamiento estético, que fue bautizado como Renacimiento Cubano, vino acompañado de medios como la instalación, el performance y el arte efímero o de procesos. Años más tarde, esos mismos artistas serían tildados de “extranjerezantes”, “penetrados ideológicos” o simplemente “mediocres” y “chapuceros”, por aplicar sus cono-

cimientos del arte contemporáneo internacional. Se utilizó la prensa para desacreditarlos, pero también la opinión de críticos o funcionarios poderosos que establecieron criterios nefastos y dañaron prometedoras carreras.

Aventuras tridimensionales (1983)

Hexágono, Equipo de Creación Colectiva (1982-1985), desarrolló un trabajo en la línea de Jan Dibbets. Los conceptos habían sido asimilados; ya ni siquiera se tomaba la acción como lenguaje final. Interactuaban con el paisaje, el ritmo de la naturaleza y el libre albedrío. Los gestos se transformaban en una ficción que delataba pragmatismos; las precisas intenciones de sus autores buscaban un documento como colofón mientras intentaban congelar el devenir del tiempo.

Durante su efímera existencia, Hexágono dejó un pequeño grupo de fotografías que subyugan por su belleza. Son obras de las que emana un ritmo acoplado como las ideas de sus autores. Resaltaba entre ellos Consuelo Castañeda, quien más tarde difundiría el arte de acción y procesos entre sus afortunados discípulos del Instituto Superior de Arte. Para Antonio Eligio Fernández (Tonel) esta experiencia influyó a decantar el curso de su obra.

La vida es una mierda y el mundo está loco (1984)

En una década caracterizada por la formación de grupos y la colaboración, Segundo Planes Herrera se distinguió por su acentuada personalidad. Su enorme producción de pinturas, dibujos e instalaciones venía acompañada de sofisticadas acciones plásticas, definidas por ideas teatrales que se nutrían del legado de Konstantin Stanislavski (1863-1938). Con un lenguaje onírico -quizás disparatado-, las piezas aludían a los mejores exponentes del DADA y del Surrealismo.

Planes trabajó sobre los estados alterados de la mente para producir originales visiones del contexto y su propio ego. Deslumbró por su capacidad de trabajo y originalidad. Las soluciones formales de sus acciones tenían un sello personal y estaban cuidadosamente articuladas, a pesar de que utilizó materiales pobres como huevos e incluyó gestos escatológicos que involucraban comida podrida, excremento o semen.

Asalto artístico-sexual (1986)

Los rituales ideopolíticos aprendidos en décadas de convivencia socialista definieron la estructura de algunas obras, incluidos los performances. Los “asaltos” eran una práctica usada por los revolucionarios para estimular la emulación socialista, algo así como una competencia amistosa entre diferentes entidades. Sin previo aviso una escuela podía ser “asaltada” por los estudiantes de otra, quienes invadían físicamente el recinto y confrontaban al plantel señalando y criticando lo negativo. Luego se retiraban, retando a las aturdidas víctimas en medio del desorden.

Algo parecido hicieron Consuelo Castañeda y Humberto Castro en la antes mencionada acción de la UNEAC-, cuando interrumpieron un panel de respetados teóricos que “dilucidaban abiertamente” sobre el tema del sexo en el arte.

Los artistas intentaron “subirle la parada” a los organizadores “penetrando” en la sala de conferencias disfrazados de Pene y Vagina, al tiempo que disparaban a los presentes chorros de un incierto líquido, semejante a la leche. El gesto trascendió, acelerando la proliferación de tales acciones plásticas. La readaptación del “asalto” colmó el ambiente de las aperturas de exposiciones en la capital.

En esa misma jornada, Magdalena Campos-Pons exhibía su obra *Ritos de Iniciación*, haciendo un comentario de su propia identidad y convirtiéndose en el primer artista en incluir el medio del video en un performance.

Para el ojo que mira (1987)

Manuel Mendive, un cubano con herencia africana, encomendado a sus deidades religiosas fue el autor más prolífico de la década y desarrolló un estilo personal en su pintura, escultura y acciones plásticas, inspirado en la cultura afro-cubana y la naturaleza. Sus eventos a manera de peregrinaciones son notables, así como los que transcurren en paisajes naturales.

Un memorable acontecimiento fue la multitudinaria procesión en la que el artista y su séquito, formado por bailarines, músicos y animales, a los que intervenía con pintura directamente sobre sus cuerpos en movimiento, cruzaron la bahía de La Habana en varias embarcaciones. Al ritmo de los tambores sagrados todos los participantes caminaron por La Habana Vieja hasta el Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes. La acción semejaba un carnaval con la cadencia de una conga; usaba un lenguaje conceptual para confirmar la devoción a los Orishás.⁷

El Che Guevara y un pan con yuca (1987)

¿Dónde estás Caballero Bayardo, hecho historia o hecho tierra? fue el título de la obra que Ariel Serrano presentó durante una exhibición del Grupo Arte Calle en la Galería L. Se trató de una pintura sobre papel de aproximadamente 14 x 16 pies, que reproducía la archiconocida imagen del Che Guevara, bordeada por el texto del título. La instaló como una alfombra justo a la entrada de la galería, por lo que era difícil no pisarla. Dos horas después de la apertura el espacio estaba lleno y como parte de la obra, una pareja de muchachas comenzaron a bailar una danza lésbica. Al cabo, el papel comenzó a romperse y esto indujo a ciertos espectadores a pisar y caminar sobre la imagen con toda intención.

La Galería L pertenece a la Universidad de la Habana, por lo que el público mayoritario era de artistas y estudiantes curiosos. Uno de ellos, enfurecido, preguntó que quién era el artista. Alguien señaló al escualido Serrano, quien fue imprevistamente atacado con un poderoso “pan con yuca”.⁸ El agresor se identificó como un dirigente estudiantil comunista y dispuso cerrar la galería inmediatamente, sacar a los visitantes a la calle y enclaustrar a los integrantes del grupo Arte Calle (excepto el líder Aldito, que ese día estaba ausente), en un auditorio contiguo, donde se improvisó un juicio que solo fue el principio de un maquiavélico acoso.

La directora y curadora del espacio, Marta Limia, perdió su puesto después de que el propio Fidel Castro la descalificara en un video mostrado a los miembros del Partido Comunista. La prensa oficial se sumó a la campaña contra los artistas y la funcionaria. Limia sufrió acosos que incluyeron la inhabilitación de su vivienda por obreros de Alcantarillados que abrieron un profundo surco desde la calle hasta el último cuarto de su vivienda, la instalación de cámaras de vigilancia frente a ella y la visita continuada de agentes de seguridad. Hoy vive en Nueva York. Serrano no se ha recuperado del trauma, huyó a Canadá e hizo desaparecer todo vestigio de la obra, negándose a publicar siquiera fotos del evento, razón por la cuál su obra no está incluida en esta exposición.

La escuela de Cuenca (1988)

Arturo Cuenca fue un pensador clave para interesados en las teorías del arte conceptual durante los 80s, un “laboratorio ambulante” que reciclaba todo el acontecer artístico, teatro, danza, música, arquitectura, diseño, moda, filosofía. Cualquier tema podía desencadenar una apasionada disertación y por tanto transformarse en obra de arte.

En 1989 Cuenca realizó la exhibición *Castillo de la Real Fuerza (Ciencia e Ideología)*, un proyecto que utilizaba la arquitectura como metáfora. El inmueble funcionaba como una “zona de tolerancia” donde se convocó a importantes figuras del poder político a discutir temas seleccionados por el artista-maestro de ceremonia. Cuenca diseñó y cosió un sofisticado vestuario con complicadas armazones de alambre, que utilizó en acciones a manera de danza contemporánea, potentes en su originalidad. El evento atrajo una substancial cantidad de participantes que mantuvieron activo el performance durante 30 días.

Ecós del Golem (1988)

José Luis Alonso Mateo emprendió una investigación práctica de sus conocimientos a través de obras efímeras e instalaciones. En las series de fotografías inéditas de 1988, *El pelo crece y Pirámides*, el artista implica el suceso como elemento central, documentando su propio tiempo y modificando su contexto con ficciones y poesía que recuerdan los diálogos formales de Hélio Oiticica o Ligia Clark, cuyas obras Alonso no conocía entonces. En la acción *El Eco de Humberto*, parafraseando el nombre del autor de *El nombre de la rosa*, Alonso literalmente lanzaba la nueva edición firmada del libro contra su propio público, haciendo un comentario humorístico sobre el acceso a la información en la isla.

Alejandro López es uno de los pocos artistas que ha continuado trabajando el performance como medio exclusivo desde finales de los 80s. La ambición de sus proyectos es explícita en los títulos de las obras: *El Triunfo del Nuevo Héroe es Colectivo* (Bertold Brecht), *Fundamentos de la teoría de la parapsicología del arte*, *El mito del Golem*, *Comisión para la investigación de fenómenos históricos*, *La fuerza de ese aliento divino*. Para ellas prepara elaborados escenarios, encarnando personajes de extensa y sofisticada retórica que instruyen al público, quien a veces es invitado a participar de las acciones.

Yo no existo, sólo mi intención (1988)

El grupo Provisional fue un colectivo que se dedicó a realizar obras de performance. Ellos se proponían como integrantes provisionales por eventos y tiempo de membresía y colaboraron con otros colectivos como Arte Calle, Puré⁹ o artistas individuales. Las ideas dadaístas marcaron la mayoría de las obras. La política fue un tema constante que abordaron con humor. Sin embargo, lo que más interesaba era explorar las intenciones del artista, lo que definía o no una obra de arte.

En más de una ocasión fueron inspirados por un niño de singular temperamento, Alejandro Acosta, quien demostró sus dotes naturales en dos de las obras, *Rock Campesino y Japón*. *Very Good, Rauschenberg* fue un “asalto” para interrumpir una conferencia de prensa de este artista en el Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes. Acercaron al artista un cartel con la imagen de un indio donde se leía: “Very Good Rauschenberg” y exigieron la firma del agasajado. Asimismo, le obligaron a firmar uno de sus posters publicitarios con pincel y pintura fresca, para agregarle valor al *souvenir*.

En estrecha colaboración, Aldito apareció disfrazado de indio y armado con arco y flechas, se sentó en el piso frente al homenajeado y permaneció inmóvil durante toda la conferencia. Luego comentaría jocosamente que “Rauschenberg no se enteró de lo que allí pasó porque estaba muy borracho, quizás creyó que le estaban dando una reverencia descendientes de indios de verdad...”¹

Arte y derechos en la calle (1988)

Los colectivos Arte Calle y Art-De fueron el objeto de varias confusiones debido a sus métodos de trabajo, organización de sus eventos, el parecido de los nombres y el hecho de que ambos grupos proponían la calle como un espacio de trabajo favorito, aunque con muy diferentes objetivos. Arte Calle se concentraba en reflexiones analíticas del arte y la política, desde un punto de vista revolucionario rectificador, utilizando estrategias urbanas como el *graffiti* o irreverentes actitudes propias del comportamiento de las bandas callejeras o “gangas”.

En cambio, Art-De definía la denuncia con su actitud y no con la estética, su propio nombre era explícito al respecto: *Art=Arte, De=Derecho*. Fue un grupo pionero en el activismo de Derechos Humanos en la isla, colaboradores de Amnistía Internacional y Human Right Watch. Art-De asumió una postura disidente; sus propuestas estaban cerca de lo que llamarse un arte de caballete y sin embargo se mezclaban con acciones transgresoras en medio de la vía pública. Dos de sus integrantes, Marco Antonio Abad y Jorge Crespo cumplieron dos años en la cárcel por sentencias derivadas de estos eventos. Juan-Sí, fundador del colectivo, ha continuado desarrollando el performance a lo largo de su carrera.

El segundo malentendido ha sido aceptar que el grupo Arte Calle se componía de un único líder intelectual y que el resto eran participantes ejecutores. Aldo Damián Menéndez López, más conocido como “Aldito”, líder carismático de este colectivo,

produjo textos significativos para los murales e ideas originales, pero las ideas se discutían entre todos. En muchas ocasiones colaboraban con otros colectivos y artistas independientes. El resultado del trabajo se dividía en dos importantes estructuras: los textos que escribían en murales callejeros o pancartas y que tomaban forma con tipografías satánicas y las intervenciones pictóricas que evocaban el bad-painting y otros modismos del graffiti norteamericano, estos últimos en su mayoría pintarrajeados por Pedro Vizcaíno. Con el tiempo los integrantes del grupo fueron definiendo sus obras personales hasta que el colectivo se disolvió. Ofill Echevarría, Ernesto Leal, Ariel Serrano, Pedro Vizcaíno precisaron tempranamente sus intereses, así como el propio Aldito, quien fue tomando distancia en su liderazgo para hacer performances y más tarde emprender una carrera como escritor.

El Grupo Independiente La Campana, guiado por Carlos Pérez Vidal, desarrolló la mayor parte de su trabajo en la provincia de Las Tunas. Con intereses conceptuales, los integrantes del grupo crearon instalaciones y performances que hacían énfasis en la crítica social y fueron tildados de contrarrevolucionarios y perseguidos por las autoridades que les prohibían el acceso a trabajar en la calle. A principio de los 90s fueron apoyados por un sacerdote franciscano español, quien les brindó protección sacando fuera del país a la mayoría de sus integrantes. Armando Martínez Rueda, uno de ellos, continúa preso en Cuba desde 1995.

Cambia el tema, hablemos de pelota (1989)

Esta es la expresión popular que se pronuncia con instinto de conservación cuando una discusión deriva hacia un tema delicado, como casi siempre es la política. Este fue el “Alfa Tasgolfo”, que se interpretó en respuesta a la situación de censura en el panorama cultural. Michelle Fuentes, quien se perfilaba como uno de los “cerebros” más influyentes entre sus correligionarios y hoy aborrece el medio, afirma que fue Hubert Moreno quien organizó la travesía protesta deportiva. Aglutinó alrededor de 35 artistas y 2 críticos de arte, que formaron dos equipos, Azul y Rojo. Los participantes reafirmaron sus ideas con humor y sarcasmo sin sospechar que después de este gesto, se impondría la autocensura como regla para continuar “dentro del juego”, parafraseando al poeta Heberto Padilla. Tania Bruguera afirmaría: “El juego de pelota marcó un cambio súper fuerte. Hasta ese momento la gente había sido súper frontal, a partir de ahí la gente entendió que ya se habían agotado todas las posibilidades, se había hecho todo lo que se podía y no se podía hacer. ¡Ya! ¡Se acabó! Esto ahora es cinismo...”¹

Arte “noventoso” (1990)

“Ochentosos” u “ochentianos” son nuevos términos surgidos en Cuba durante los 90s y refieren ciertas concepciones estéticas que se asocian a la generación anterior. Implica obras de explícito contenido social, políticamente transgresoras y de estructura formal no idónea para el mercado. Es curioso que los artistas o colectivos que trabajan hoy en Cuba e incluyen acciones y performances como medio también se les atribuya el displicente adjetivo. El hecho es que este término, lejos de definir conceptos estéticos, delimita dos períodos históricos con éticas muy diferentes, períodos en que una rigurosa censura y una acomodada

autocensura, se impusieron respectivamente como credo de la mayoría.

En Mayo de 1990, durante la inauguración de *El objeto esculturado*, exhibición que marcó el fin del momento en que el poder y los intelectuales intentaron un entendimiento, un artista que no estaba invitado a exponer realizó una acción plástica como protesta. Ante sus desconcertados compañeros, supuestamente seducidos por la institución para participar en dicha muestra, Ángel Delgado entregó unas pequeñas tarjetas impresas con la imagen de un hueso a cada participante, aludiendo a la lealtad de los perros, en este caso sus colegas artistas. Posteriormente, en una de las salas de exposiciones formó un círculo con las tarjetas y colocó un ejemplar del periódico oficial *Granma*; se bajó los pantalones y acercó su retaguardia para defecar sobre el diario. El artista Félix Suazo, uno de los curadores del proyecto, se acercó a Delgado tratando de controlar el instinto del protagonista. Aparentemente el protector no coincidía con el título de la obra, *La esperanza es la única que se está perdiendo*, acompañando al artista con su persuasión a concluir su declaración corporal. Ángel Delgado fue juzgado por escándalo público y cumplió 6 meses de cárcel.

La mayoría de los artistas que permanecieron aprendieron la lección, la prueba está en que no ha habido reincidentes. Y no sólo la “ley” fue persuasiva: ciertos bálsamos financieros y un fugaz acceso al *mainstream* despertaron un glamour incontenible y demarcaron con claridad la “conducta apropiada”.

“...Por ello, los que no son capaces de comprender estas cosas, los que se dejan engañar, los que se dejan confundir, los que se dejan atolondrar por la mentira, son quienes renuncian a la Revolución. ¿Qué decir de los que han renunciado a ella y cómo pensar de ellos, sino con pena? ¿Abandonar este país, en plena efervescencia revolucionaria para ir a sumergirse en las entrañas del Monstruo Imperialista donde no puede tener vida ninguna expresión del espíritu? Y han abandonado la Revolución para ir allá. Han preferido ser prófugos y desertores de su Patria a ser aunque no fuera más que espectadores...”⁴

¡Coge tu pan!

Glexis Novoa

La Habana / Miami, Abril de 2007

¹ *Cuban Performance Art of the 80s, (Chronology)*, documental y material de archivo, © Pan con Yuca, 1998.

² A. I. N. (Agencia de Información Nacional), cable, Cienfuegos, 03/12/81.

³ Alejandro G. Alonso, *Juventud Rebelde*, La Habana, 06/15/1981.

⁴ Palabras a los Intelectuales, Fidel Castro, La Habana, Junio de 1961.

⁵ Acción Plástica, editorial, *Juventud Rebelde*, La Habana, 11/10/81.

⁶ C. D. R. (Comités de Defensa de la Revolución) Organización de masas de membresía obligatoria para todos los ciudadanos mayores de 14 años de edad que organiza la vigilancia por cuadra para “alertar” sobre cualquier amenaza contra la Revolución. Fundada el 28 de Septiembre de 1960.

⁷ Orishá (también escrito Òrisà, Orisá y Orixá) es una Divinidad hijo/a y manifestación directa de Olóbrun (Deidad|Dios) (u Olódumàrè).

⁸ Como las “galletas”, “piñazos”, “bufas” o “yitis”, el “pan con yuca” es un popular modismo marcial cubano. Al parecer muy eficaz, relacionado con algún tipo de escarmiento.

⁹ Puré, (Havana, Cuba, 1986-1987), Miembros: Adriano Buero (Havana, 1964), Ana Albertina Delgado, Havana, 1964), Ciro Quintana (Havana 1964), Lázaro Saavedra, (Havana, 1964), Emy Taño (Havana, 1964).



LA UTOPIA DE VIVIR JUNTOS (EN ESTOS TIEMPOS) UNA REFLEXIÓN SOBRE EL ARTE CONTEMPORÁNEO EN CUBA, LA ISLA¹

Yuneikys Villalonga

Compartir el tiempo

Matando el Tiempo pudo haber sido el título de una exposición de arte cubano, en Cuba, durante los años ochenta. La frase tiene del espíritu jovial y popular; de humor y de ironía, a la usanza de los proyectos de entonces. También (acaso en el presente continuo de la acción), recuerda la hiperquinesis que caracterizó buena parte de la producción de esta década –especialmente contrastante con la precedente.

Mucho se ha hablado de como las “inquietudes” del grupo de Volumen Uno², o el sinnúmero de acciones de la por entonces “plástica joven” en la segunda mitad de los ochenta, revolucionan viejas estructuras y tendencias en el arte cubano. Pudiera destacarse, sin embargo, entre las más interesantes aristas de este legado, el replanteamiento del Tiempo. La obra de arte incorpora en su proceso una cualidad temporal, cuando se habla, por primera vez, de ‘acción plástica’ o ‘performance’. Pero también, algunos cambios en la concepción y el rol del artista en este momento inciden en su tiempo, a diferencia de la época precedente, y en beneficio del arte. “En la década cubana del setenta no existía esa categoría que después conoceríamos como ‘artista independiente’. Esto, sin dudas, significaba un drama para los creadores pues el tiempo y el sosiego les eran realidades ajenas y, por supuesto, indispensables”³.

En una sociedad que nombra uno de sus salones “El Arte, un Arma de la Revolución”, o que se declara en “Período de Rectificación de Errores y Tendencias Negativas”⁴, se demanda del artista el papel de un profesional activo. Su tiempo para la creación se ennoblece, se justifica, cuando no sólo produce una obra de valor simbólico para la Sociedad, sino que se pretende un agente ideológico y político de cambio.

A la par de estar inmersos en una coyuntura (social, política, artística) muy específica, el discurso de los creadores se oxigena con la investigación sobre tendencias y preocupaciones internacionales; especialmente a través de revistas y catálogos, que se comparten y comentan. Desde esta vía, se activa también la discusión en torno a la capacidad movilizadora del arte. “La gente ve en el pasado lo que necesita del presente” dice Lázaro Saavedra acerca de la presencia de Joseph Beuys en el arte cubano: “¿Porqué hablamos de Beuys en los 80, tratándose de una personalidad que viene casi de los 60? ¿Problemas de información? ¿O es que hay ciertas condiciones objetivas en el mundo del arte que hacen necesaria [su] consulta [...]?”⁵

Sin embargo, la independencia del artista, en la década de los ochenta, no se consolida del todo. En este “tiempo para la creación”, no sólo se ejercita una conciencia colectiva: muchos creadores se proyectan desde la colectividad. Proliferan agrupaciones más o menos duraderas. Mayormente, se trata de jóvenes estudiantes de arte con intereses comunes, que se unen para exponer juntos, o para colaborar durante algunos años. Se asume la experimentación grupal como metodología

de aprendizaje y de exploración de todos los límites posibles (el arte -su estética, su enseñanza; la tolerancia social, institucional, política). El tiempo del artista sigue siendo, todavía, un tiempo compartido.

A pesar de que los proyectos colectivos estuvieron entre lo más interesante de los ochenta, éstos han sido muy poco representados en las exposiciones y colecciones más significativas de arte cubano. Tal es el caso de la sección dedicada a la década, del Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, cuya curaduría tiende más a la expresión individual y al objeto.

Parte de su invisibilidad radica en que por entonces no hay mucho interés en documentar las acciones, cuando el mercado de arte o la trascendencia no constituyen todavía preocupaciones mayores o se tiene poca experiencia en el asunto. Pero también, en que muchas de ellas no sobreviven, en la historia al filtro censor, por “diversionistas” o “problemáticas”, como le pudo haber llamado algún funcionario de la época. Su documentación apenas vuelve hoy a las nuevas generaciones de artistas e historiadores del arte, a través de una escasa bibliografía y, por supuesto, desde lo anecdótico. Así, se le otorga casi siempre una apariencia mítica, legendaria, que en la mayoría de los casos tiende a distorsionar, hiperbolizar o minimizar lo ocurrido.

Los intentos de mantener la capacidad de detección y “corrección” de las fallas en el sistema artístico, de la enseñanza, de la Sociedad toda, son recurrentes cada cierto tiempo en el arte cubano. Habría que señalar sin embargo que, si igual de complejo, el contexto ahora es bien diferente y se ha manifestado rápidamente cambiante e inestable en los últimos 20 años en la Isla.

Algunos artistas han desarrollado, desde las distintas academias de estudios artísticos, desde el taller o la casa, una labor pedagógica, que se basa en el principio de exploración y análisis colectivos.

Tal es el caso de Lázaro Saavedra. Uno de los ejemplos más recientes es su participación en el trabajo del Colectivo ENEMA (2000-2003), compuesto por 13 estudiantes del Instituto Superior de Arte (ISA). Su colaboración se acerca más a una prolongación de la experiencia del Grupo Puré⁶, que a la relación vertical tradicional profesor-alumno. Se parte aquí de la base del aprendizaje mutuo.

ENEMA hace una propuesta metodológica para el estudio del performance, basada en la interpretación colectiva de piezas de la historia del arte internacional y cubano en esta manifestación. Suple así la carencia de su estudio sistemático en el programa de la Escuela. En muchos casos se “resuelven” en grupo las dificultades de los ejercicios. Es interesante la discusión que el Colectivo abre, acerca del fenómeno de la masividad, como factor que permea la educación y la vida toda en la Isla.

Por otro lado, Desde una Pragmática Pedagógica (1990-), es un programa liderado por René Francisco Rodríguez que ha aglutinado, desde su creación, diferentes generaciones de estudiantes del ISA. DUPP⁷ quiere promover el diálogo e intercambio entre individualidades, así como revivir ciertos aspectos de la escena artística de entonces, que han quedado

relegados en la contemporaneidad. Por eso es plataforma de exposiciones, intervenciones públicas, discusiones, entre un grupo fluctuante de jóvenes, cuando las otrora enriquecedoras clases de Crítica⁸ en el Instituto, se debilitan. “[...] El problema no está en el programa, sino [...] en la forma en que se está solucionando [...] Algo que afecta el desarrollo del mismo es el hecho de posponer los ejercicios sin razones fuertes [...] Esto demuestra que no hay bomba...” dice al respecto un estudiante, hacia finales de 1999.⁹

Otras propuestas de diálogo e intercambio artístico han propiciado el Espacio Aglutinador (1994-) y el Taller de Arte de Conducta (2003-). Este último surge como una iniciativa pedagógica alternativa de Tania Bruguera, con base en su casa de Tejadillo 214 (T214). Se trata de una preparación multidisciplinaria de dos años, para jóvenes creadores, no necesariamente provenientes de la esfera de las artes plásticas. La artista colabora con especialistas cubanos y extranjeros de diversas áreas de investigación, que vienen a La Habana a realizar talleres teóricos o prácticos, de una semana. Por otro lado, el Espacio Aglutinador, no tanto como proyecto educacional, sino expositivo, ha sido plataforma para el encuentro alternativo de artistas, críticos y curadores de dentro y fuera de la Isla. En este sentido, puede entenderse como un proyecto colectivo de los artistas Ezequiel Suárez y Sandra Ceballos —que continúa hoy esta última. Por su carácter independiente, Aglutinador suple importantes carencias en el contexto habanero de los últimos 15 años. Se ha ganado hoy un espacio de credibilidad en ferias y eventos internacionales.

Las experiencias de trabajo colectivo, en sus diferentes momentos, directa o indirectamente, sirven de brújula en la investigación de artistas jóvenes, que no de forma casual se agrupan, mayormente, a inicios de su carrera. Tal es el caso de Los Carpinteros, el Gabinete Ordo Amoris (que llega a los predios del arte, desde el Instituto de Diseño Industrial), “Omarito y Duviel”, “Soca y Fabián”, “Jimmi y Wilfredo”, el “Departamento de Intervenciones Públicas” o recientemente, “Zenia y Yunior”, “Luis o Miguel”, etc.

Para el artista joven, la cualidad experimental y alternativa de la experiencia colectiva en la historia del arte cubano, tanto como la tradición que le llega de los ochenta, ha constituido un paradigma legitimante. La acción o proyección grupal, si bien casi siempre de corta duración, le facilita también una mejor inserción en los complejos circuitos de circulación del arte cubano hoy. Cabe destacar que el mayor porcentaje de éste (así como de su crítica y curaduría) tiene lugar fuera de Cuba: en centros de arte, museos, galerías internacionales. Su acceso depende mucho del contacto y la gestión individual y cada vez menos del incentivo estatal, a través de proyectos de intercambio, becas, premios o exposiciones que lo promuevan¹⁰.

Los intentos de aglutinar o de establecer espacios alternativos de diálogo entre los artistas más establecidos en la actualidad son, no obstante, los menos. Con los años, la obra de un gran número de creadores ha penetrado un circuito de instituciones culturales y comerciales, tanto dentro como fuera de la Isla, que les permite proyectarse como pequeñas instituciones autónomas: probablemente la entidad de legitimación que encontraban antes en el grupo.

Memorias de la Postguerra

A inicios de los años noventa, la imagen (estética, pero también anímica) de la Ciudad de La Habana, se acerca a la de un sitio desbastado por la guerra. Lo que se conoce como “Período Especial en Tiempo de Paz”, luego del derrumbe del Campo Socialista, es por entonces un signo de cambio de los tiempos: una crisis que se extiende desde la economía y la política, hacia los valores del individuo, del arte, de la sociedad toda. Las “pérdidas humanas” corresponden a los tantos familiares y amigos que se van. Entre ellos, un gran número de los artistas que se encontraban activos en la década anterior...

Esta estampa se recoge en los dos números de *Memorias de la Postguerra* (1993): un intento de Tania Bruguera, de hacer confluir voces cubanas, ahora dispersas en diferentes latitudes. El soporte utilizado es el mismo que sirvió siempre de conexión con el mundo exterior: la publicación periódica; la visualidad y formato de éste recuerda el *Granma*, órgano oficial del Partido Comunista de Cuba.

Pero el proyecto sólo alcanza a ver sus dos primeras ediciones antes de ser censurado. Puede notarse en esta reacción (tanto como en la necesidad de “jugar pelota”, en el '89¹¹ o en el encarcelamiento de Ángel Delgado tras *La Esperanza es lo último que se está perdiendo*, de 1990) — el evidente divorcio entre el arte joven y una estructura institucional, que ya no está dispuesta a demandar (mucho menos a asimilar) una crítica fuerte y directa. Sobre el último caso, dice Gerardo Mosquera: “...fue una clara advertencia a los intelectuales en un momento de contraofensiva reaccionaria. Otros performances por sorpresa de la década del 80, con mayor filo político, sólo habían sido reprimidos in situ, sin tan duras consecuencias posteriores.¹²”

El lenguaje y la actitud del arte que sobreviene tienen mucho de supervivencia. Los creadores de entonces cronican, observan con sorpresa, reaccionan atónitos, a su situación inmediata, que prácticamente se acusa con solo apuntar. Los comentarios se van despojando de ese “narrador subjetivo”, involucrado en el proceso social, para adoptar cierta distancia crítica ante la situación. La entrada del dólar americano y el mercado de arte, el turismo y la creación de empresas mixtas, la escisión generacional y otros desastres de la emigración son parte del panorama.

En 1991 Fernando Rodríguez concibe un personaje o heterónimo (Francisco de la Cal) que le permite una constante confrontación entre la realidad de los noventa y el proyecto e ideales colectivos de principios de los 60 en Cuba. Asimismo, Antonio Núñez se interesa en las malformaciones de la educación y la conducta, que se observan en las generaciones más jóvenes. *Niño de Nadie* (1997-2005), dentro de una serie de piezas con este tema, compila imágenes que remiten a la pérdida de la inocencia.

Una de las funciones sociales del arte en este momento es la de propiciar una plataforma de herramientas, que permitan aproximarse a la nueva realidad; dar una continuidad y coherencia a una forma de pensamiento, a un “sentido común”, dentro del caos, si bien la mirada se vuelve cada vez más personal e introspectiva.

En su obra temprana, Carlos Garaicoa realiza una exploración arqueológica de la Habana Vieja, entonces completamente en ruinas. Sus intervenciones in situ, apuntan a ese estado de belleza y deterioro, a las historias reales o potenciales que los ojos acostumbrados de la población de la Habana olvidan, o pasan por alto.

Siguiendo una línea de investigación antropológica, resalta el trabajo del Gabinete Ordo Amoris, que apunta al reciclaje industrial y la estética de la provisionalidad en el diseño popular, como alternativa a necesidades materiales. Éste se ha visto continuado hasta hoy, desde diferentes vías, por los ex-integrantes del grupo y sin dudas constituye una referencia interesante en la obra de la joven creadora Beverly Mojena. Su línea de modas “Beverly Top Plastic” se basa en el reciclaje de jabas bolsas plásticas.

Estira la mano hasta donde puedas (1999), una mano “extendible” hasta diez metros de largo, forma parte de una serie de piezas que José Ángel Vincench asocia a los vaticinios y consejos recibidos en sus “consultas” o “registros” religiosos santeros. A partir de esta experiencia personal se desencadenan una serie de asociaciones filosóficas, existenciales, con el contexto cubano de entonces.

Otra obra cargada de signos autorreferenciales con que indagar en la contemporaneidad, es la de Jairo Alfonso. *Ejercicio de la Memoria* enlaza de forma creativa imágenes instantáneas de su recuerdo. El viaje a lo rural, memorias de familia, íconos de la niñez - referentes culturales para toda su generación- son instrumento para aproximarse a su realidad contemporánea.

Paso a paso, el artista de la Isla comienza, en este momento, una carrera de integración al circuito internacional del arte, que demanda la trascendencia de localismos, hacia un tipo de lenguaje y preocupaciones más universales. La participación en exposiciones, becas, residencias artísticas en el exterior, el creciente interés de críticos, curadores y coleccionistas extranjeros, ofrece oportunidades de ocupar un lugar competitivo en las discusiones contemporáneas de la escena del arte internacional. Pero estas “luces” a veces no se vislumbran entre olas de fuerte turismo cultural, que imponen un mercado de arte desordenado e ingenuo.

La resistencia

El análisis de la problemática del viaje en la contemporaneidad ofrece un ejemplo paradigmático, que serviría para explicar la nueva situación del creador en Cuba. Este tema, que propició símbolos e íconos claves en el paisaje artístico de los noventa —el mapa de la isla, el malecón, el aislamiento, las diferentes vías de enajenación y escape real o imaginario- no se aborda más de aquella forma dramática y radical. Según la experiencia del artista, -ahora con mayores posibilidades de intercambio con el afuera que el resto de la población- es asociable al reencuentro familiar, a la mejora económica, al éxito profesional, a la actualización en el tiempo.

Pero si bien es mucho más fácil estar actualizado hoy, la información a que los creadores acceden se procesa cada vez más, de forma individual. A la escasez de espacios de discusión colectiva, se une una variedad de intereses,

difíciles de agrupar o clasificar en grupos o tendencias en el arte contemporáneo. La mayoría de los artistas jóvenes proveen, al hablar de su obra, referencias internacionales muy diversas y dispersas, que no forman parte de un diálogo con sus contemporáneos, como era el caso de Beuys o Kosuth, en los ochenta.

Mientras tanto, a las instituciones culturales locales les es más y más difícil seguir su trabajo profesional, en todo el Mundo. Se comienzan a formular hoy proyectos que aglutinen y sistematizan la información sobre exposiciones y becas de cubanos de la Isla en el exterior¹³. Sin embargo, paradójicamente, falla todavía la inclusión de aquellos artistas que se han ido a vivir fuera de Cuba.

Es interesante señalar, como factor recurrente hoy, la intención del creador, de aprovechar determinados “privilegios” con que cuenta dentro de la Sociedad cubana¹⁴, para incidir en su medio. Esto permite que los trabajos funcionen como virus o detonantes, que subvierten el funcionamiento o lógica de determinado sistema. El trabajo de T10 (Territorio Transfuncional), por ejemplo, se basa en la constante trasgresión de diferentes territorios y dominios (biológicos, radiales, telefónicos, virtuales) con la habilidad del *hacker* y la sombrilla del arte. Las piezas, a decir del artista, son como “bombas de tiempo”. Están activas independientemente del conocimiento de la gente y abren una brecha de error en el funcionamiento o comportamiento de estos sistemas. Ciertas características, como la generación de un lenguaje críptico de bases de datos, o la capacidad de mutar constantemente, impiden encontrar, fácilmente, las herramientas para asimilar o “contrarrestar” este tipo de obras. Presenciamos aquí un nuevo tipo de activismo o arte de resistencia.

El “dominio” utilizado por Lázaro Saavedra en su proyecto *Galería Imeil* es el de la intranet. Pone a circular, de correo a correo, comentarios muy agudos sobre acontecimientos culturales, sociales, políticos recientes en forma de textos, comics, fotografías. Esta vía es más controlada y eficiente que una página web, por las dificultades de acceso a internet en Cuba hoy y se presenta, recientemente, como un nuevo vehículo para la publicación de estados de opinión alternativos a la institución. Saavedra restaura el ejercicio crítico y la polémica inteligente sobre una realidad muy parcializada por los medios, desde el ejercicio del sentido común y el humor popular, que caracteriza su trabajo todo.

Una pieza de sonido compila llamadas telefónicas realizadas al azar, en las que el dúo “Luis o Miguel” hace la pregunta: “¿Está usted en la Lucha?” El trabajo funciona como un censo o *survey* alternativo necesario y aplicable a cualquier sociedad contemporánea. La ambigüedad y relatividad de la formulación se torna política con facilidad. Las respuestas son un termómetro de los miedos y la paranoia de la gente, tanto como de la relajación ideológica de otro gran segmento de la Sociedad por estos días.

Este tipo de trabajos es asociable al concepto Arte de Conducta, que propone Tania Bruguera. El término nace de sus inconformidades con el vocablo performance en tanto acción que artista y público han llegado a objetualizar y estetizar. El Arte de Conducta se expande fuera de los límites artísticos. Tiene que ver con una experiencia de vida y prioriza la función social.

Según Bruguera, su Taller de Arte de Conducta se vuelve una intervención a largo plazo en la Ciudad de La Habana. La artista hace énfasis en la estrategia formativa, a partir del reconocimiento de la educación como un arma ideológica y de poder. Paralelamente a las instituciones oficiales, incide en el desarrollo de una nueva generación de creadores jóvenes.¹⁵

Asimismo *CM (Death by Gun after Félix)*, de Harold Vázquez, moviliza una reflexión sobre el tema de la trascendencia y el anonimato de la muerte violenta en los Estados Unidos. El aparato traduce las estadísticas de investigaciones recientes sobre el tema, al tiempo real. En una especie de simulacro (un conteo regresivo, que sitúa al espectador en el supuesto momento en que se comete el crimen), reestablece al fenómeno su connotación social, que se diluye en la cifra, cuando este tipo de eventos se acumula y serializa.

Otras obras se vuelven hoy medio para compartir una sensibilidad, una filosofía o "verdad" individual del artista. Más allá del tono de ensayo histórico, político, sociológico que se ha heredado de una tradición de marcado carácter conceptual, se propone a menudo una poesía visual, muy cercana a lo banal, y que aparentemente no pasa de constituir algo "bello", curioso o interesante; eso es suficiente.

Tal es el caso de *Dislexia*, presentada por Iván Capote en la VII Bienal de La Habana. El espectador debe tomar un tiempo y desplazarse en el espacio para descubrir, en la brecha que abre un brazo de metal dentro de una bandeja de aceite, la frase "La vida es un texto que aprendemos a leer demasiado tarde". Esta obra recuerda aquella serie de alrededor del año 2000, en que Inti Hernández reitera una especie de filosofía de vida: "Acerca de la Felicidad, lo primero y lo último es creérsela". Glenda León, por su parte, realiza intervenciones efímeras en cristales -de techos, ventanas, puertas- con una capa transparente de flores naturales, que sirven ahora de filtro para mirar la realidad.

Esta serie de obras reconcilia una mirada desde y hacia el individuo. Se explora en estados de ánimo y actitudes sociales: el estrés (Yoán Capote), el escepticismo (Pavel Acosta), la violencia, la agresividad social y cultural, la marginalidad (Alexandre Arrechea, James Bonachea).

Numerosas instancias políticas generan hoy, en la Isla, una gran saturación ideológica: la escuela, el trabajo, las organizaciones de masas, los medios de difusión masiva. Únicamente en el propio individuo, mínima expresión de la estructura social, reside el espacio cívico. Junto con la proliferación de grupos de interés literario, religioso, filosófico en Cuba, esta serie de obras, que reconcilian una mirada desde y hacia lo individual, rescatan hoy un espacio de civilidad, en el arte. Así, se constituyen en otra manifestación de resistencia. Son, en el contexto cubano, un signo de cambio de los tiempos. Mientras tanto, para el artista contemporáneo, el sentido de pertenencia generacional, social, cultural: la conciencia epocal, se expanden; trascienden el espacio físico de la Isla.

Matando el Tiempo

¿Tiene sentido exponer hoy una vasta representación de artistas contemporáneos, que se identifican aquí como "cubanos", a partir de un vínculo (cualquiera que este fuere) con la Isla?

Para el arte cubano, tal intento no podría más que contribuir con una sana e imprescindible reconciliación y apertura hacia todo lo que ha quedado del otro lado del mar (en cualquier dirección posible); a una actualización de discursos plurales en espacio (y tiempo).

En la mayoría de los casos, el desplazamiento de los artistas cubanos en el Mundo, ha seguido los mismos derroteros que el movimiento migratorio en cualquier otro lugar del Planeta. Sin embargo, el más fuerte determinismo a que se ve sometido su arte en los últimos tiempos tiene condicionantes extraartísticas. Éstas son, ideopolíticas, y se reducen precisamente a una cuestión de fronteras, en un momento en que escasean las posibilidades de una saludable polémica y confrontación artística.

Ser un artista cubano y presentarse como tal, supone el tener que lidiar con las estrechas concepciones identitarias, que se generan "desde dentro" y "desde fuera" de la Isla. Pero también, con la mirada foránea que se tiene de Cuba, como uno de los últimos sitios de turismo político en el Mundo. Podemos decir, no obstante, que una de las tantas cosas aprovechables de tal situación hoy, es la posibilidad de aventurarnos, primero, hacia el circuito legitimante del arte internacional, con el ánimo de algún día, finalmente, regresar a casa para ser aceptados como hijos y - en los más felices de los casos- como hijos pródigos.

Yuneikys Villalonga La Habana, Junio de 2007

¹ La selección de este segmento del arte cubano contemporáneo responde únicamente a cuestiones prácticas: a la necesidad de proveer un complemento de las otras miradas curatoriales de "Matando el Tiempo"; al hecho de trabajar desde la Isla, que torna difícil el seguimiento sistemático de las prácticas de otros artistas interesantes, fuera de Cuba y a la confianza en que éstas quedarán representadas, de todas formas, en la colaboración. No así, a un criterio de discriminación o escisión geopolítica.

² Once artistas que se reúnen para exponer (si bien no conforman un grupo) en 1981. La exposición se titula *Volumen I* y siembra una gran polémica en la escena del arte cubano, al introducir un cambio de visualidad y preocupaciones cercanos a las corrientes internacionales del momento.

³ Castro, Elvia Rosa. "Parole, parole, parole" En: *Déjame que te cuente; Antología de la crítica en los ochenta*. CNAP, Artcubano Ediciones, La Habana, 2002 p. 9

⁴ En que el discurso oficial insta a la juventud a una mirada crítica y revisionista del proceso revolucionario hasta el momento (1986).

⁵ Navarro, Desiderio. "Encuesta referente a la recepción de Beuys en Cuba" En: *Kuba OK* (Catálogo). Städtische Kunsthalle Dusseldorf, 1990 p. 35

⁶ Activo entre 1986 y 1989, este grupo aglutinaba también a Adriano Buergo, Ana Albertina Delgado, Ermy Taño y Ciro Quintana, además de algunos participantes ocasionales.

⁷ Acrónimo de "Desde una Pragmática Pedagógica".

⁸ Asignatura del programa de primer año, que se basa en la implementación de trece ejercicios de creación, de gran peso conceptual, a los estudiantes, a partir del texto "On the Manner of Addressing Clouds", de Thomas McEvilley (En: *Artforum*. Junio, 1984). Durante las "Críticas" se generan interesantes reflexiones y polémicas entre los estudiantes, los profesores y otros artistas, críticos, estetas, filósofos que se invitan. A partir de la década del noventa éstas se van debilitando, entre otras cosas, por la falta de incentivo (profesional y económico), que da al traste con otras propuestas de trabajo, con determinados privilegios. Se pierden importantes profesores de la década anterior.

⁹ "En el Ademán de reconsiderar las nubes" En: Revista ENEMA. Instituto Superior de Arte. Año 1, No. 1, La Habana, 2000.

¹⁰ La Bienal de La Habana, desde 1984, ha jugado un papel importante en este sentido: ha insertado el arte cubano dentro de un discurso internacional; ha introducido en la escena artística de la Isla, discusiones sistemáticas de un grupo interesante de profesionales de todo el Mundo. Sin embargo, por múltiples razones (principalmente económicas y políticas) su calidad y posibilidades de acción se ven reducidas en las últimas ediciones. Otros proyectos aislados son de por ciento desestimables.

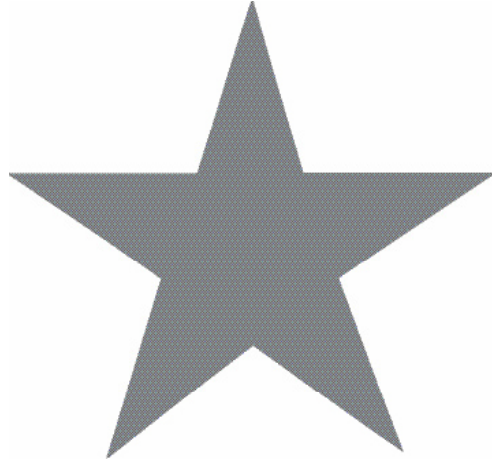
¹¹ "Todos Estrellas; la Plástica Cubana se Dedicará al Baseball", Estadio José Antonio Echevarría, La Habana, 1989.

¹² Mosquera, Gerardo. "Arte Preso". Palabras a catálogo de la exposición de Ángel Delgado "1242900", Espacio Aglutinador, La Habana, 1996).

¹³ Se crea una pequeña sección informativa en el periódico "Noticias de Arte Cubano". Por otro lado, el Proyecto Parábola, auspiciado por la Agencia Española para la Cultura, publica textos, biografías, imágenes de exposiciones recientes en el exterior, en Internet.

¹⁴ Por ejemplo, las posibilidades de viaje y contactos en el exterior, la relativa facilidad de adquirir la moneda libremente convertible, la tenencia de computadoras o el acceso al email.

¹⁵ Parafraseado de: Villalonga, Yuneikys. "Tania Bruguera; su lugar y su momento" En: *Lida Abdul/Tania Bruguera; Maintenant Ici Là-Bas*. FRAC Lorraine, Metz, 2006.



VIVIR RODEADO DE AGUA

Papo Colo

Salida:

Vivir rodeado de agua, es vivir la fantasía de salir, de escaparse más allá del horizonte, de redescubrir lo que ya tienes, de nacer nuevamente en otro territorio. La historia del mundo es la historia de migraciones, desde nuestra salida de África hace millones de años, hasta hoy que la torre de Babel es reconstruida en cada ciudad.

Isla:

En una isla es más fácil notar y sentir los síntomas de la cultura y de lo que es un país. Lo insular encierra herméticamente su política, lenguaje y costumbres creando un aislamiento a otros mundos, una ventaja –desventaja según su uso y desarrollo. El nacionalismo intenso produce una cultura particular, pero también se desarrolla un autoritarismo psíquico de los grupos dominantes, cada territorio- país/isla se convierte en el centro del mundo.

Este narcisismo geográfico es el motor creativo de su cultura, y el concepto de su formación. Esto sucede también en los grandes países/territorios y países/ imperios, pero en una isla este mecanismo cultural /político es más obvio. En las islas no existe un lugar para esconder las sombras.

Sabemos que por la historia o el destino, los países/ territorios se convierten unos en más y otros en menos poderosos. La regla de la estética pertenece a la cultura dominante, cualquier evolución en su contra será devorada por la seducción o por la fuerza. La globalización comprueba este hecho, lo local es lo global, pero lo global pertenece a aquel que inventa el sistema de la producción y distribución de la economía y es a quien el símbolo de la imagen cultural pertenece. La cultura global tiene dueño con nombre y apellido. Sabemos que existen fuerzas culturales alternativas, no alineadas o en vías de desarrollo, pero a estas se les asigna un plano menor con una importancia limitada.

La apropiación militar, política y cultural es el instinto natural de cualquier territorio-país pero su vecino se protege con el aislamiento, la desconfianza y la diplomacia para no llegar a la guerra. El arte nos cuenta todo porque su labor es asimilar la historia, así que no hay límite para la cultura aunque exista la censura. Lo difícil y lo sabio está en el balance de las fuerzas influyentes de la creación y donde se encuentra la razón.

Geopolítica:

La imaginación cubana es la creadora de su revolución y de su diáspora, el arte funciona como el archivo de su historia. Su narrativa críptica y como todas las culturas, caótica, (lo inesperado es la fuerza que cambia la cultura) se va transformando y recreando, un cuerpo revolucionario y reaccionario que evoluciona hacia lo desconocido. Imagino qué Cuba será antes y después de su Revolución. Me pregunto hacia qué ruta se dirigirá su ingenio. Tratar de entender y analizar esto es uno de los principales propósitos

de esta muestra. Después de todo para eso es el arte, para entender otras culturas e iluminarnos el futuro.

Las Antillas han sido antes y después de las dictaduras. España, Estados Unidos, y nosotros mismos. Las Antillas (la isla que se repite) fue el punto de partida del descubrimiento del Nuevo Mundo, el primer punto de contacto, el primer síntoma de lo híbrido de los nuevos continentes. El sincretismo de las Américas y su conquista empezó aquí y continúa en nuestra genética.

Geografía:

Las Antillas son de geología volcánica, somos la punta disecada de un volcán. Los vientos provenientes de África convergen en el Atlántico para formarse en huracanes y entrar al Mar Caribe. Somos la puerta de los vientos y África nos penetra todos los años hasta llegar a los Estados Unidos, un viaje físico y destructor que reconstruye nuestro miedo.

La formación de nuestras islas es la transformación y el tránsito del Viejo al Nuevo Mundo. Las Antillas, el primer experimento, su primera evolución, su mestizaje, un avance de lo que hoy llamamos multicultural. Las Antillas son un archipiélago del Mar Caribe. Su totalidad es más complicada y se compone de otros territorios. El Caribe es nuestro Mediterráneo, las Antillas son el borde entre el Océano Atlántico y el Mar Caribe, su frontera entre Norte y Suramérica.

Clima, tiempo, trabajo;

El calor induce al ocio, que es el privilegio de matar el tiempo de alguna forma divertida. Mejor matar el tiempo, porque al final el tiempo nos va matando. El artista es el maestro del ocio, se puede pasar días con papel y lápiz y crear un vocabulario único. Recordemos que el que crea un lenguaje inventa una forma de vida, así que el ocio -que es una forma de programar el aburrimiento- es la forma de concentración más creativa, porque mata el tiempo para fabricar más tiempo en otra dimensión y otras formas de vidas.

El artista tiene el poder de convertirlo todo en parte de su juego porque construye el mundo a partir de su particular imaginación. Los conceptos artísticos son los que la historia absorberá. La poesía, visual y literaria es al final la narrativa que en el futuro se estudiará.

Sabemos de los poderosos por los que cuentan su momento en la historia. Conocemos al Quijote y a Cervantes y no a los gobernantes de la época, a Platón y Aristóteles más no a los emperadores de su tiempo. Picasso es mucho más popular e influyente que Franco y Duchamp siempre será más estudiado que De Gaulle. Neruda estará siempre entre nosotros mientras Pinochet será una momia militar. Y así va la historia el poder de la imaginación, el cual es más duradero que el poder de la administración política y militar.

Me parece que el ocio de el artista, es la máquina invisible que mueve la historia. El artista es el historiador espiritual de los territorios y de los actores que lo ocupan temporalmente. El artista conoce muy bien la ficción de la inmortalidad. Por eso crea una realidad a partir de la ficción para expresar la

verdad. Es al final un camaleón histórico, un trickster que crea y recrea al mundo desde su punto de vista, contemplándolo en sus momentos de ocio, para matar su tiempo y multiplicar las emociones de su Testimonio.

Muestra:

En esta muestra, tanto usted como yo, sin ir a Cuba, sabrá de esta isla porque el artista que la vive nos la cuenta en forma visual, conceptual, sintetizada y poética. Debemos tomar en consideración que la mayoría de este arte es creado por artistas que nacieron durante la revolución socialista, régimen que nace de una dictadura neocolonial norteamericana y se convierte en un régimen autoritario comunista. Bajo este régimen, el arte debe producirse de acuerdo con las ideas políticas de una élite gobernante que define lo que es arte. Para el artista que no cree en el régimen su única salida es el exilio o la doble vida.

El artista cubano sobrevive a estos obstáculos con la imaginación de dos lecturas artísticas al mismo tiempo. Una idea que los sitúa dentro de lo que llamo "Conceptplus" o más allá de el arte Conceptual, movimiento en el arte, inventado por los franceses y explotado por los norteamericanos, ingleses, alemanes, italianos y los demás países / territorios que siguen su cola en el mundo del arte. Hoy en día no puedo ver arte conceptual sin pensar en la publicidad y mercado. A los 100 años de su nacimiento el arte conceptual se ha convertido en un cliché publicitario cuyo propósito es persuadir y fomentar la inversión económica en el arte.

La experiencia de los artistas que no pertenecen a los países de la élite, nombrados anteriormente, tienen que desarrollarse más allá de esa idea conceptual. El artista cubano, al igual que el latinoamericano, vive una dualidad cultural que transporta su sensibilidad a diferentes dimensiones. Vive una diáspora interior y otra exterior. Son en su mayoría huérfanos económicos. Son relegados a un segundo plano por los poderes globales del mundo cultural.

Es así que nace la necesidad del arte Conceptplus. Producto de una visión independiente de cualquier forma de poder, y que lo local se transforme en lo global.

Esta muestra es educación e historia, y confirmación de la voluntad del artista cubano, en esa dirección, que por las razones que sean -aislamiento, bloqueo, represión, condición económica, libertad condicionada- ha sobrevivido ha logrado desarrollar su vocabulario. El artista cubano ha hecho arte con los materiales que ha tenido, que no son muchos, esto desde un punto de la historia del arte los sitúa en el contexto de arte povera, o arte pobre, pariente del arte conceptual y surrealista, pero a diferencia de artistas europeo y norteamericanos los artistas cubanos lo hacen por una necesidad real y no caprichosa o de rebeldía al consumismo como en el caso de arte povera. SU DISCURSO ES LA ESTÉTICA DE LA NECESIDAD, la urgencia de reinventarse, con recursos limitados, a la manera cubana.

Lo subversivo en su arte es la historia de su Revolución y su exilio, de sus contradicciones, de lo que sus artistas han

podido hacer de todo esto con el tiempo que les ha tocado, o les han robado. Estos artistas han tomado la evolución de su Revolución y han fabricado su futuro. Sabemos que todos los destinos son originales y que matas el tiempo como medida de lo recorrido. SU ARTE ES RECUPERAR ESE TIEMPO para crear otro tiempo ya que el discurso de su Revolución al parecer se ha ido desgastando después de medio siglo de fundamentalismo político.

El ingenio de los cubanos es legendario y será difícil que el esfuerzo y la proeza de un régimen revolucionario autoritario (vestigio de los militares españoles, norteamericanos y rusos) se diluya en el consumismo desbocado de su otra capital: Miami. Está por verse la evolución de su tesón y la capacidad de su voluntad de independencia en su relación con el poder del norte, que siempre ha sido una de amor-odio como con todas nuestras antillas.

Esta muestra es un retrato conceptual que se ha tardado décadas en crearse. Su virtud consiste en la seducción de lo desconocido. Sabemos poco de lo que realmente pasa o ha pasado en esta isla. El mundo ve a Cuba como una zona invisible e incomprensible, una isla de diversión y de turismo político, una zona prohibida, un área subversiva que hay que olvidar e ignorar...por el momento.

Espero a usted le den ganas de conocerla, como pieza ilegal aérea de arte, brincando la cerca del bloqueo físico y mental que burócratas miopes en ambos lados han impuesto. Y que esta muestra tenga el efecto de transparencia intelectual de que los artistas pertenecen a un país, pero también son dueños del mundo.

Exit Art enseña estos trabajos con el propósito de conocer más a nuestro vecinos antillanos ya que ellos también forman una gran parte de la población neoyorquina y de los Estados Unidos. Un secreto a voces es que los Estados Unidos es un país bilingüe y bicultural. El español no es un idioma invasor, estuvo siempre desde la formación de las Américas. Al igual que el inglés, el portugués y el francés, cada americano tiene dos corazones y estos lenguajes son su futuro. Toda situación política se encuentra en un estado transitorio, en cambio los idiomas como los medios artísticos se transforman, se traducen y sobreviven. El arte se compromete a contar las historias en distintas perspectivas. Su propósito es enseñar todos los lados de la verdad y fluir hasta el final de una historia que no sabemos aún completamente.

Esta muestra es una arteria del Corazón Cubano que se destapa en Nueva York. Cuba, una transformación heroica e histórica en nuestra América o un eslabón perdido de la democracia como otros la ven, es si duda la mayor de la Antillas y parte de el bilingüismo cultural y lingüístico de Norteamérica. English only es Spanish also. Ningún artista sabe cómo serán las Américas del futuro, lo que si sabemos es que nada en este mundo es eterno y que la inmortalidad acabará desapareciendo en el cosmos.

Papo Colo
Manhattan, Abril de 2007



ARTISTS

*Solo shows

Francis Acea (Havana, Cuba, 1967)

Lives in Miami, FL and works

Member of Ordo Amoris Cabinet collaborative (1994-2003)

Education: Higher Institute of Industrial Design, Havana, Cuba (1991)

Grants: ArtPace International, San Antonio, TX (2001); Ludwig Foundation, Aachen, Germany (1998)

Selected Exhibitions: *DBA Francis Acea*, Magnan Enrich Contemporary, New York, NY (2007)*; *Liverpool Biennial*, Liverpool, UK (2004); *Antennas: Network transmission/ Taxi Limousine*, Ludwig Forum for International Art, Aachen, Germany (1998)*; *Water-sugar and the Provisional Show*, Centre for the Development of the Visual Arts, Havana, Cuba (1996)*

Golden Years (Años dorados), 2006

Gold plated TV antenna, pipe, rope, wire

Dimensions variable

Courtesy of the artist and Magnan Projects, New York, NY

Acea uses the motif of the antenna in this piece about communication and economic success. For Cubans, the antenna has been a symbol of the desire to overcome governmental information control. Gabinete Ordo Amoris, which Acea belonged to until the group disbanded, created installations of antennas using fragile materials. In his new role as the owner of a periodical publication in exile, Acea has turned the golden antenna into a statement of triumph.

Pavel Acosta (Camagüey, Cuba, 1975)

Lives and works in Havana, Cuba

Education: Higher Institute of Art, Havana (2003); Professional School of Visual Arts, Camagüey, Cuba (1993)

Grants: Contemporary Art Forum Kitchener Area (CAFKA 04) (2004); School of Fine Arts, Paris, France (2003)

Selected Exhibitions: *Flight/Vuelo*, Hunterian Art Galleries, Glasgow, Scotland (2006); *Utilitarian Dreams*, Brighton Festival of the Digital Moving Image, Lighthouse Foundation, Brighton, UK (2005); *8th Havana Biennial*, Centre for the Development of the Visual Arts, Havana, Cuba, (2003); *Private Zones, Common Places*, Centre for the Development of the Visual Arts, Havana, Cuba (2002)*

From the series *Out*

Football, 2006

Baseball, 2006

Basketball, 2006

Volleyball, 2006

C-print

39.5 x 26 inches each

Courtesy of the artist

The series *Out* is a research project in progress investigating imagined or utopian spaces that people share in the city. It explores the settings where street games take place, with rules that are often changed in order to adapt the game to each location.

Jairo Alfonso Castellanos (Aguacate, Cuba, 1974)

Lives and works in Havana, Cuba

Education: Higher Institute of Art, Havana, Cuba (1998); National School of Art, Havana, Cuba (1993)

Grants: Batiscafo Residency (2007)

Selected Exhibitions: *Dolly Back*, Gallery 23 & 12, Havana, Cuba (2006-2007)*; *Cuba, the next generation*, Cuban Artspace, Center for Cuban Studies, New York, NY (2005); *Cuba from the Inside. Looking Out*, Elaine Jacob Gallery, Dwayne State University, Detroit, MI (2004); *Instrumentaciones*, Wifredo Lam Center, Havana, Cuba (2000)*; *Instrumento para una nueva comunión, Gardens of Union de Escritores y Artistas de Cuba*, Havana, Cuba (1999)

A journey with grandpa Juan (Un paseo con abuelo Juan), 2006

Video, sound

3 minutes

The vixen and the roller (La zorra y el rodillo), 2006

Video, sound

4:36 minutes

All works courtesy of the artist

"Remembering is editing. In our memories, images are built according to a process favorably resembling a confrontation with the contemporary world," states Alfonso on film editing. This personal archive presents visual references to a rural culture that constitutes a "natural" or original state as a point of departure and a universe.

(José Luis) Alonso Mateo (Havana, Cuba, 1964)

Lives and works in Miami, FL

Education: Higher Institute of Art, Havana, Cuba (1989)

Selected Exhibitions: *Desafortunada visita del coleccionista al estudio del pintor*, Museo Universidad de Guanajuato, Guanajuato, Mexico (2004); *Bienal de Pintura*, Museo Rufino Tamayo, Mexico City, Mexico (2002, 2000, 1998); *Héritage Familial*, Galería Universidad Metropolitana, Mexico City, Mexico (2000); *Los cubanos llegaron ya*, Galería Nina Menocal/Ex Teresa, Mexico City, Mexico (1992)

Umberto's Echo (El eco de Umberto), 1988

Performance documentation, photographs, object (artist's book)

Dimensions variable

This performance took place in the context of an exhibition that dealt with information (*No por mucho madrugar amanece más temprano*, Fototeca de Cuba, Havana, Cuba). Responding to the eagerness of Cuban readers to own a copy of *The Name of the Rose*, by the famous Italian semiotician Umberto Eco, Alonso Mateo produced his own edition of 35 copies. Punning on the phrase "book launch," a party to celebrate the publication of the book, Alonso Mateo impersonated Eco and literally launched or threw, the book across the room.

Hair grows (Self-portrait) [El pelo crece (Autorretrato)], 1989

Performance documentation, photographs

8 pieces: 11 x 14 inches each

For thirty days, the artist records the daily growth of his hair after shaving his head.

Red Pyramid (La pirámide roja), 1989

Performance documentation, photographs

16 pieces: 11 x 14 inches each

One hundred pyramids made of cardboard and painted red are placed in various parts of the city, intervening in industrial areas, shops, public spaces and private homes.

Remake of Umberto's Echo (Remake de El eco de Umberto), 1988-2007

Performance, 60 artist's books, 7.5 x 5.5 x 1 inches each
All works courtesy of the artist

Alexandre Arrechea (Trinidad, Cuba 1970)

Lives and works in Madrid, Spain and Havana, Cuba
Member of Los Carpinteros collective from 1992 to 2003
Education: Higher Institute of Art, Havana, Cuba (1994)
Grants: Artist in Residence, The Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art (2002); United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (2000)

Selected Exhibition: *The Garden of Mistrust*, Museo Patio Hereriano, Valladolid, Spain (2006); *25th São Paulo Biennial*, Sao Paulo, Brazil (2002); *Havana Biennial*, Havana, Cuba (2000)

Selected Collections: Museum of Modern Art, New York NY, National Museum of Fine Arts, Havana, Cuba; Thyssen-Bornemisza Contemporary Art Foundation, Vienna, Austria

White Corner (Esquina Blanca), 2006

Two channel video installation
Dimensions variable
Courtesy of the artist and Magnan Projects, New York, NY

The two self-portraits suggest a double ambush. Wielding a machete and a baseball bat, Arrechea personifies the paranoia surrounding racism and violence.

Arte Calle Group

Iván Alvarez, Hugo Azcuy, Max Delgado, Ofill Echevarría, Erick Gómez, Alan González, Ernesto Leal, Leandro Martínez, Aldito Menéndez, Ariel Serrano, Pedro Vizcaíno, and others)

Active: 1988-1989

We don't want to be intoxicated (No queremos intoxicarnos), 1988

Performance documentation
10 black and white photographs
Photocopy flyer, 13 x 8 inches
Courtesy of Glexis Novoa and Aldo Menéndez

This performance took place before a panel of art critics on "The Concept of Art" hosted by the Union of Cuban Writers and Artists, Havana, Cuba. Members of Arte Calle barged into the room, dressed up in white robes and anti-gas masks, carrying signs that parodied revolutionary slogans such as: "Art or Death. We will prevail" and "Art Critics: Be advised that we have absolutely no fear of you." They also distributed flyers with a survey. They later discreetly withdrew to the back of the room until the end of the event.

Easy Shopping, 1988

Performance memorabilia, flyer, invite, poster
Courtesy of Glexis Novoa

Members of Arte Calle painted themselves using gold and silver paint and went on a night walk distributing flyers that announced the event to interested people on the street. When they arrived at the polluted port of the city of Havana, they plunged into the water for a few minutes, returning to the gallery (Centre for Visual Arts and Design) with the original paint running and smeared with traces of petroleum. The performance was a sarcastic commentary on the government's most recent financial move, which consisted of a campaign to offer moderate amounts of cash in dollars in exchange for personal objects made of gold and silver (objects that traditionally carry sentimental value and are treasured by fam-

ilies for decades), which would then be hammered out in front of the needy clients in order to free them from all "impurities."

Juan Pablo Ballester (Camagüey, Cuba, 1966)

Lives and works in Barcelona, Spain
Member of ABTV collaborative (active 1988-1991)
Education: Higher Institute of Art, Havana, Cuba (1991); National School of Art, Havana, Cuba (1986)
Grants: Departament de Cultura de la Generalitat de Catalunya (2004); Cintas Fellowship (1998-1999)
Selected Exhibitions: *Enlloc*, Pablo Serrano Museum of Art, Zaragoza, Spain (2005); *Ophelias and Ulysses. On Spanish contemporary art*, Museum Küppersmühle Sammlung Grothe de Duisburg, Germany (2002); *Cuba Siglo XX. Modernidad y Sincretismo*, Centro Atlántico de Arte Moderno, Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, Spain; Fundación La Caixa, Palma de Mallorca; Centro de Arte de Santa Mónica, Barcelona, Spain (1996); *Homenaje a Hans Haacke (ABTV)*, Proyecto Castillo de La Fuerza, Castle of the Royal Force, Havana, Cuba (1989)
Selected Collections: Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Havana, Cuba; Ludwig Forum für Internationale Kunst, Aachen, Germany; Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid, Spain; Museum of Art, Fort Lauderdale, FL

From the series *Enlloc: Untitled* (De la serie *Enlloc: Sin título*), 2005

C-print
2 pieces: 60 x 50 inches each
Courtesy of the artist and Alonso Art, Miami, FL

A "mosso de scuadra" (Catalan policeman) with idealized features (blonde, slender and romantic) is found hiding (presumably due to a forbidden romance) along with a teenager who, physically and socially, embodies a generation of Andalusian immigrant children born in Catalonia. The official nationalism discriminated against this generation because of its supposed "contaminating" influence.

James Bonachea (Sancti Spiritus, Cuba, 1977)

Lives and works in Havana, Cuba
Member of DUPP Gallery (1999-2001), ENEMA collective (2000-2005)
Education: Higher Institute of Art, Havana, Cuba (2003); Professional School of Art, Trinidad, Cuba (1997)
Grants: Tanera Mor International Artists Workshop (2007); Batiscafo Residency (2006); United Nations Educational and Scientific Cultural Organization (2000)
Selected Exhibitions: *A Imagen y Semejanza*, Galería MYTO, Mexico City, Mexico (2007)*; *Medios compartidos* (with Janler Méndez), Centre for the Visual Arts and Design, Havana, Cuba (2006)*; *Havana Biennial*, Havana, Cuba (2000, 2003); *La Huella Múltiple*, La Casona Gallery, Havana, Cuba (2002); *Pie de obra* (Label, with Wilfredo Prieto), Ludwig Foundation of Cuba, Havana, Cuba (2000)*

The plastic artist (El artista plástico), 1999-2000

Performance, documentation, photographs
3 photographs: 5 x 7 inches each

Bonachea plays with the double meaning of a "plastic artist." He twists his body next to a sign that identifies him to the public as a strange creature or circus animal with certain "tricks." This piece was performed at the Ana Mendieta Performance Festival in Havana in 1999.

Aesthetic Value (Valor estético), 2006

Performance, documentation, photographs
4 photographs: 5 x 7 inches each

The artist shaves using gold powder in the street and looks into a motorcycle's rear-view mirror. Can the material, i.e., gold, turn this "marginal" action into a work of art? Bonachea calls into question art values at a moment when his personal life does not stray far from that reality.

James Bonachea and Janler Méndez (Villa Clara, Cuba, 1972)

Méndez lives and works in Havana, Cuba

Founding member of ENEMA collective (2000-2003)

Education: Higher Institute of Art, Havana, Cuba (2003); Professional School of Art "Samuel Feijoo", Villa Clara, Cuba (1995)

Selected Exhibitions: *Medios compartidos*, Centre for the Visual Arts and Design, Havana, Cuba (2006)*; *La Huella Múltiple*, White Hall, San Francisco de Asis Convent, Havana, Cuba (2006); *All paths lead to MOMA*, Gallery 23 & 12, Havana, Cuba (2005)*; *From a Black Hole. Cuba*, (ENEMA Collective) Cultural Centre of Spain, Havana, Cuba (2003)

Batá, 2006

Performance, video documentation

7:53 minutes

All works courtesy of the artist

The "batá" is a double drum used in Afro-Cuban religious ceremonies. Bonachea and Méndez create a human batá. A folk percussion player beats on his chest and sings. Microphones are used to amplify the sounds produced. The body is the echo chamber for the music.

Saidel Brito (Matanzas, Cuba, 1973)

Lives and works in Guayaquil, Ecuador

Education: Higher Institute of Art, Havana, Cuba (1997)

Grants: Artist-in-residence, Ludwig Forum für Internationale Kunst (1998)

Selected Exhibitions: *The (S) Files*, El Museo del Barrio, New York, NY (2007); *Bienal de Valencia*, Valencia Spain (2007); VII Havana Biennial, Havana, Cuba (2003); *While Cuba waits*, Track 16 Gallery, Santa Monica, CA (1999); *VI Bienal Internacional de Cuenca*, Cuenca, Ecuador (1998)

Thirteen (Trece), 1995-2007

Installation, 13 funeral wreaths

Dimensions variable

Courtesy of the artist

Trece: F, Treize, It. Tredici, In. Thirteen, A. Dreizehn, P. Treze, E. Dektri (Etim. del lat. Tredecim.), adj. Ten and three. Thirteen books. 2. Thirteenth. Leo XIII; number Thirteen; year Thirteen, apl. The thirteenth day of the month, u. t. c. s. November 13. 3. The Protest of the Thirteen. 4. Thirteen participants at the Last Supper. 5. March 13. 6. m. A group of signs used to represent the number 13. 7. July 13. 8. Twelve and one: Thirteen; Touch yourself. 9. Each one of the thirteen rulers that ancient cities had. 10. Good luck. 11. Bad luck (bad omens). 12. Each one of the (Thirteen) knights elected by their confreres to the general chapter, governance, and administration of the Order of Santiago. 13. For the Father of the Nation, twelve men sufficed to make the Revolution. Thirteen famous ones (The): When Pizarro was on the Island del Gallo waiting for reinforcements, he noticed that his men were discouraged. He then rallied his troops, drew a line on the ground and invited those who wanted to accompany him on the conquest of Peru to cross the line. Thirteen men did, and they went down in history as the "Thirteen famous ones."

"To be in one's thirteen." Fr. fig. an expression meaning to insistently persist in something one has learned or begun to undertake. 2. Fig. To hold on to one's opinion against all odds.

Tania Bruguera (Havana, Cuba, 1968)

Lives and works in Havana, Cuba and Chicago, IL

Education: The School of the Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, IL (2000); Higher Institute of Art, Havana, Cuba (1992); Academy of Fine Arts San Alejandro, Havana, Cuba (1987); Elementary School of Art 20 de Octubre (1983)

Grants: Prince Claus Foundation Grant (2000); Guggenheim Fellowship (1998); Sao Paulo Biennial (1996)

Selected Exhibitions: *Documenta 11*, Kassel, Germany (2002); Venice Biennale, Venice, Italy (2001, 2005)

Selected Collections: Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt, Germany; Daros Foundation, Zurich, Switzerland; Centre Pompidou, Paris, France

Post-war Memories (Memorias de la Postguerra), 1993-1994

Ephemera, printed magazine, 2 issues

Courtesy of the artist

Postwar Memory was a magazine edited and produced in 1993 by Tania Bruguera. It recorded public opinion in the art scene at the beginning of the "Special Period." Critics and artists in and outside of Cuba collaborated with texts and illustrations. After two issues, it was censored. Although a third issue was completed, it was never published.

Head down; Body of Silence; Burden of Guilt; Displacement; Studio Study; Vigilantes: The Dream of Reason, 1996-2006

Performance documentation, video, photographs, ephemera

Courtesy of the artist

La Campana Independent Group (The Bell)

Oscar Aguirre Comendador, Eduardo Lozano, Manuel Martínez Ojeda, Armando Martínez Rueda, Geandy Pavón and Carlos Pérez Vidal

Active: 1988-1993

Selected Exhibitions: *Metaphor of the Exodus*, Private residence, Havana, Cuba (1993); *The Mission*, San Juan de Letrán Church Gallery, Havana, Cuba (1992); *Quo vadis, Cuba?*, Park at H and 21st Streets, Havana, Cuba (1989); *The Bell*, Christian Solution, Art Gallery, Las Tunas, Cuba (1989); *Solution IV: Academic*, Vicente García Museum, Las Tunas, Cuba (1989); *Solution III: Institutional*, Guillermo Nogueira Gallery, Las Tunas, Cuba (1989); *Green Light*, Center for Visual Arts, Las Tunas, Cuba (1988)

Installation featuring memorabilia (photographs, catalogues, newspaper clippings) of the following projects:

The Showcase: La Campana Store (La Vidriera: Tienda La Campana), 1988

Guest artist: Lázaro Estrada (Tabaquito), La Campana Store, Las Tunas, Cuba

Dimensions variable

Courtesy of the artist

Green Light (Luz Verde), 1988

Guest artists: Lázaro Estrada (Tabaquito), Geandy Pavón and Kadir López, Centre for the Visual Arts, Las Tunas, Cuba

Academic (Académica), 1989

Guest artists: Lázaro Estrada (Tabaquito), Rolando Polanco Santana, Marlon Lastre and René Peña, Vicente García Provincial Museum, Las Tunas, Cuba

Dimensions variable

Courtesy of the artist

Quo Vadis, Cuba?, 1989

Guest artists: Carlos Faxas and the Chorus of San Juan de Letrán Convent, Havana: Carmen Luna, Roger López Del Castillo, León Hirzel, Michael Hirzel, Alejandro Rubio, Archie Flores, Alejandro Robles, Otto Pantoja, and others; Park H and 21 Streets, Havana, Cuba

Dimensions variable

Courtesy of the artist

María Magdalena Campos Pons (Matanzas, Cuba, 1959)

Lives and works in Boston, MA

Education: Massachusetts College of Art, Boston, MA (1988)

Grants: The Artist Resource Foundation (2004); The Louis Comfort Tiffany Foundation Grant (1997)

Selected Exhibitions: *Everything is separated by water*, Indianapolis Museum of Art, Indianapolis, IN (2007); Sevilla Biennial, Sevilla, Spain (2006); *Getting Emotional*, Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston, MA (2005); Dakar Biennial, Dakar, Senegal (2004); *One Thousand Ways to Say Goodbye*, Henie Onstad Kunstsenter, Oslo, Norway (2003); *Unpacking Europe*, Museum Boijmans Van Beunigen, Rotterdam, The Netherlands (2002); *49th Venice Biennale: Authentic/Ex-centric: Conceptualism in Contemporary African Art*, Venice, Italy (2001); *Spoken Softly with Mama*, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, Canada (1998)

Selected Collections: National Museum of Fine Arts, Havana, Cuba; Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY; Ludwig Forum for International Art, Aachen, Germany

As the human body is a tree. The Voice of Silence (Como el cuerpo humano es un árbol. La voz del silencio), 1992

Performance documentation

10 photographs

Dimensions variable

Courtesy of the artist and Pack Gallery, Milan, Italy

This three-hour performance took place at the Galleria La Centrale, Powerhouse in Montreal, Canada. The artist, wearing a painted silk costume and body paint, stood while alternately facing the viewer and the wall every half hour.

Yoan Capote (Pinar del Río, Cuba, 1977)

Lives and works in Havana, Cuba

Education: Higher Institute of Art, Havana, Cuba (2001); National School of Art, Havana, Cuba (1995)

Grants: John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation (2006); Pollock-Krasner Foundation (2005); Mattress Factory (2004); Cuban Artists Fund (2004)

Selected Exhibitions: *Parallel Thoughts*, Havana Galerie, Zurich, Switzerland (2006)*; *Anímica*, George Adams Gallery, New York, NY (2004)*; *New Installations*, Mattress Factory, Pittsburgh, PA (2004); *Drawings and Projects*, Brownstone Foundation, Paris, France (2003)*; *Havana Biennial*, Havana, Cuba (2000, 2003)

Selected Collections: Museum Beelden aan Zee, El Scheveningen, The Netherlands; Arizona State University Art Museum, Tempe, AZ

The Kiss (El beso), 2004

Bronze

4 x 1.5 x 2 inches

I Want You (A ti te quiero), 2004

Steel and bronze

2 x 2 x 79 inches

All works courtesy of the artist and George Adams Gallery, New York, NY

Consuelo Castañeda (Havana, Cuba, 1958)

Lives and works in Miami, FL

Member of Hexágono, Havana, Cuba (1982-1985)

Education: Higher Institute of Art, Havana, Cuba (1982)

Grants: Cintas Foundation (1997-1998)

Selected Exhibitions: *Cybernetic Information Center*, Miami Art Museum, Miami, FL (2001); *11 Conceptual Photographers*, Generous Miracles Gallery, New York, NY (1998); *Cuba Siglo XX. Modernidad y Sincretismo*, Centro Atlántico de Arte Moderno, Cabildo de Gran Canaria, Spain (1996); *Warehouse Project* (with Quisqueya Henríquez), Miami, FL (1996)*; *Traces: The Body in Contemporary Photography*, Bronx Museum of the Arts, Bronx, NY (1995)

Selected Collections: National Museum of Fine Arts, Havana, Cuba

History rebuilds the image/ Image rebuilds the history (La Historia reconstruye la imagen / La imagen reconstruye la historia), 1987

Serigraphy on paper

20 x 29 inches

Courtesy of Howard Farber, New York, NY

From the series *Speed-Split: Untitled (Sin título)*, 1997

Digital photography

Diptych, 48 x 72 inches each

Courtesy of the artist

Nilo Castillo (Havana, Cuba, 1964)

Lives and works in Madrid, Spain

Agreement between a cow and a lamb to create an edible product (Acuerdo entre una vaca y un cordero para crear un producto comestible), 1987

Silkscreen

2 pieces: 10 x 9 inches each

Courtesy of Glexis Novoa, Miami, FL

100 Picassos, 1989

Performances, photographic documentation, object (print), flyer variable dimensions

Courtesy of Glexis Novoa and Aldo Menéndez, Miami, FL

During a lecture that dealt with the topic of "The Concept of Art" at the Union of Cuban Writers and Artists, Castillo interrupted the presentation by distributing imitations of bills with the inscription 100 Picassos. He also handed out some original works signed by different artists such as Portocarrero, Picasso, and Yo 87 (I, 87). The work ironically alluded to the incipient local art market.

Sandra Ceballos (Guantánamo, Cuba, 1961)

Lives and works in Havana, Cuba

Founded alternative space Aglutinador (with Ezequiel Suárez) in 1994

Education: San Alejandro Academy of Fine Arts, Havana, Cuba (1983)

Grants: Higher Institute of Design (1998); Art in General (1997) Longwood Arts Gallery / Bronx Council on the Arts (1997); National Salon of Contemporary Art, National Museum of Fine Arts, (1995)

Selected Exhibitions: *Don't call it performance*, Reina Sofia Museum, Madrid, Spain (2003); *What?*, Aglutinador Space, Havana, Cuba (2003); *FAIR*, Royal College of Art, London, UK (2002); *La dirección de la Mirada*, Stadthaus Zurich, Musée des Beaux-Arts Beaux-Arts, La Chaux-de Fonds, Switzerland (1998); *El Objeto Esculturado*, Visual Arts Centre, Havana, Cuba (1990)

From the series *Absolut Sandra*, 1995-2006
Collage on oil on canvas and photographs,
ephemera, catalogues
Dimensions variable
Courtesy of the artist and Espacio Aglutinador, Havana, Cuba

Founded by Ezequiel Suárez and Sandra Ceballos in their home in 1994, "Espacio Aglutinador" was a forum for experimental work by Cuban and foreign artists and curators. Led by Ceballos, "Aglutinador" has remained an alternative entity outside of Cuban cultural institutions. It has avoided any kind of censorship, housing some of the key projects of the 1990s. This administrative work has detracted from Ceballos's own work. The artist tries to symbolically revert this situation through a series of collages that incorporate materials produced by "Aglutinador."

Raúl Cordero (Havana, Cuba, 1970)

Lives and works in Mexico City, Mexico and Havana, Cuba
Education: Graphic Media Development Centre, Den Haag, The Netherlands (1995); Higher Institute of Industrial Design, Havana, Cuba (1994)

Selected Exhibitions: *Sonsbeek 9-Locus Focus*, Arnhem, The Netherlands (2001); *Havana Biennial*, Havana, Cuba (2000, 2006); *Absolut LA International Biennial*, Los Angeles, CA (2003); *Raúl Cordero*, Walter & McBean Galleries, San Francisco Art Institute, San Francisco, CA / Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY / Robert V. Fullerton Art Museum, California State University, San Bernardino, CA (2000-2001) *

Selected Collections: Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, CA; National Museum of Fine Arts, Havana, Cuba; Stedelijk Museum voor Actuele Kunst, Gent, Belgium.

I want to tell you a video (Déjame contarte un video), 1997

Installation, photography
Dimensions variable

I want to tell you a video describes Cordero's concerns about the language, specifications and boundaries of video as an artistic medium. It also comments on the artist's relation and access to technology in his context. In a photographic sequence he explains an idea for a video piece. Each "contact sheet" repeats as if it was a video sequence in loop, although it is impossible to hear what the piece itself is about. The original idea reduces to the gesture (intention) of the artist.

Session (Sesión), 2001

Video, sound
4 minutes
All works courtesy of the artist and Cristina Vives, Havana, Cuba

Arturo Cuenca (Holguín, Cuba, 1955)

Lives and works in Miami, FL
Grants: Cintas Fellowship (1992)
Selected Exhibitions: *Open Maps*, Fundacion Telefonica, Madrid, Spain / Palau de la Virreina, Barcelona, Spain (2003); *inSITE 2000*, San Diego, CA and Tijuana, Mexico (2001)
Selected Collections: National Museum of Fine Arts, Havana, Cuba; Fort Lauderdale Museum of Art, Fort Lauderdale, FL; Museum of Modern Art, Caracas, Venezuela

Castle of the Royal Force: Science vs. Ideology (Castillo de la Real Fuerza: Ciencia e ideología), 1989

Performance documentation, video, poster, costume, wire, fabric
Variable dimensions
Courtesy of the artist

A (Work/ Trabajo) x F (Force/ Fuerza) = S (Space/ Espacio)

Angel Delgado (Havana, Cuba, 1965)

Lives and works in Mexico City, Mexico and Havana, Cuba
Education: Higher Institute of Art, Havana, Cuba (1986); San Alejandro Academy of Fine Art, Havana, Cuba (1984)

Grants: Mattress Factory (2004)

Selected Exhibitions: *I Biennial of Canarias*, Canarian Islands, Spain (2006); *Art Forum Berlin*, Berlin, Germany (2006); *Artistas citados*, Nina Menocal Gallery, Mexico City, Mexico (2006); *Bale-latina*, Basel, Switzerland (2006); *La Huella múltiple*, Parallel to the IX Havana Biennial, Havana, Cuba (2006); *Art Basel Miami Beach*, Miami Beach, FL (2005)

Hope is the last thing we are losing (La esperanza es lo último que se está perdiendo), 1990

Performances, photographic documentation, prints

3 photos: 11 x 14 inches each

Prints: 2.4 x 2.4 inches each

Delgado had not been invited to show in the exhibit *El objeto es-culturado*. To the astonishment of his peers, who according to the artist had been seduced by the institution in order to participate in the show, Delgado gave each participant a card with the image of a bone printed on it, alluding to the proverbial fidelity of dogs. Later, in one of the rooms of the exhibition space, he laid out the cards in a circle, put a copy of the newspaper *Granma* in the center, and defecated on it. Delgado was tried and sentenced to 6 months in prison for creating a public scandal.

They were here (Aquí estuvo), 2001-2005

Video, sound

3:30 minutes

Restricted space (Espacio restringido), 2006

Performance documentation, photography

4 pieces: 16 x 20 inches each

All works courtesy of the artist and Galería Nina Menocal, Mexico City, Mexico

El Soca & Fabian (Adrián Soca, 1976; Fabián Peña, 1976)

Active: 2000-present

Members of ENEMA collective (2000-2003).

Education: Higher Institute of Art, Havana, Cuba (2003)

Selected Exhibitions: *Crush*, Magnan-Emrich Contemporary, New York, NY (2006)*; *Obsessive Compulsive...biDrawings*, Bernice Steinbaum Gallery, Miami, FL (2005)*; *Landings 1st*, Ex-convento de Conkal, Mérida, Mexico (2004)

In the beginning... (En el principio...), 2006

Crushed flies on canvas

Dimensions variable

Courtesy of the artists and Magnan Projects, New York, NY

Greenhouse (Invernadero), 2004-2007

Performance

Courtesy of the artist

The artists stay trapped in a sealed structure while inflating plastic bags. As the plastic covering the structure fogs over due to the artists' breath and transpiration, they write messages to the viewers on the plastic walls.

ENEMA Collective (Havana, Cuba)

Pavel Acosta, David Beltrán, James Bonachea, Alejandro Cordobés, Zenia Couzo, Edgar Echavarría, Lino Fernández, Nadieshda Inda, Janler Méndez, Fabián Peña, Hanoi Pérez, Rubert Quintana, Lázaro Saavedra, Adrián Soca

Active: 2000-2003

Selected Performances: *Morcilla & Güines Record*, Collective Performances, Wifredo Lam Centre, Pabellón, Cuba; *8th Havana Biennial*, Havana, Cuba (2003); *From a Black Hole. Cuba*, Son Space, Pals, Spain / Miguel Gallery, Munich, Germany / Gallery Christian Dam, Copenhagen, Denmark (2003); *Human Resources*, Collective performance, Havana Gallery, Havana, Cuba (2002); *You see what you feel; we see*, Collective performance, Center for the Development of Visual Arts, Havana, Cuba (2001); *Mezclilla*, Collective performance, Ludwig Foundation of Cuba, Havana, Cuba (2001)

Breaking the Ice (Rompiendo el hielo), 2001

Performance documentation, digital photographs
Dimensions variable

After a performance by Marina Abramovic, the collective decided to share the burning sensation of holding a big ice cube until it melted. This performance took place on the roof of the Visual Arts School, Higher Institute of Art, Havana, Cuba 2001.

You feel what you see; we see (Ustedes sienten lo que ven; nosotros vemos), 2001-2002

Performance documentation, digital photographs
Dimensions variable

After a performance by Marina Abramovic and Uwe Laysiepen (Amsterdam, 1984), ENEMA members hung silently upside down for 35 minutes. They faced a TV that shows that the public is the one that hangs upside-down. It was performed twice, once in Havana, Cuba (2001) and once in Camaguey, Cuba (2002).

Tied Together (Amarrados), 2001

Performance documentation, photographs, rope
Dimensions variable

All works courtesy of the artists and Lázaro Saavedra, Havana, Cuba

After the performance *Tied for a year* (1983-1984), by Linda Montano and Tehching Hsieh, 12 members of ENEMA remained tied together for a week, with the premise of not touching each other. This performance took place during the Festival Romerías de Mayo, in Holguín, 2001.

Jeans (Mezclilla), 2001

Collective performance documentation, photographs, costume
Dimensions variable

After a piece by Fernando Rodríguez and Francisco de la Cal, the members of ENEMA sewed together the sides of their jeans, and tried to walk along the street at the same time, synchronizing all their steps carefully. This performance took place at 13th Street, at the Ludwig Foundation of Cuba in Havana, Cuba (2001), and in Camaguey, Cuba (2002).

ENEMA Magazine: No. 1, 2000, No. 2 & 3, 2000, No. 4, 2001, Instituto Superior de Arte, Havana, Cuba

All works courtesy of the artists and Lázaro Saavedra, Havana, Cuba

ENEMA collective was active between 2000 and 2003. Made up of 13 students from the Higher Institute of Art, it was led by professor Lázaro Saavedra. ENEMA developed a methodology to study performance art through the remake and reinterpretation of classic works in the genre. Later on, the methodology became more complex, and it included the realization of projects by Cuban artists not yet carried out. ENEMA also published a magazine and produced several videos parodying TV news while simultaneously documenting their own works. (Notinemas)

Henry Eric (Camaguey, Cuba, 1971)

Lives and works in Madrid, Spain and Havana, Cuba

Education: Complutense University of Madrid, Madrid, Spain, (PhD, 2006); Higher Institute of Art, Havana, Cuba (2000); Professional School of Art, Camaguey, Cuba (1996)

Grants: Fellowship, Christoph Merian Stiftung (2005); Artist in Residence, Fluid Image Art Centre (2004); Fellowship, John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation (2002-2003)

Selected Exhibitions: *IV Valencia Biennial*, Valencia, Spain (2007); *Mi Casa*, Iranian Alliances Across Borders Studio, Basel, Switzerland (2005); *Open Madrid*, Madrid, Spain (2005); *Biennial of Ceramic into Contemporary Art*, Albissola Mare, Italy (2003); *Los Ángeles Latino Film Festival*, Los Angeles, CA (2003); *While Cuba waits. Art from the nineties*, Track 16 Gallery, Santa Monica, CA (1999)

Transitory Room, 2000-2007

Installation featuring: *Those who dig their pyramid (Los que cavan su pirámide)*, 2000-2005

Public intervention, table, map, photography, video
Dimensions variable

This intervention was carried out in August 1999 and August 2000 at the Cristóbal Colón cemetery, founded between 1871-1886, which contains a rich and vast collection of monuments dedicated to generals, intellectuals, and politicians. The artist selected a group of dead people with ordinary histories whose remains were then exhumed with the consent of their families, and deposited in urns created by the artist. In this way, the deceased were granted the transcendent status enjoyed by any famous person through art.

Blaze on the rune (Lampo sobre la runa), 2000-2004

Public intervention, photography, video
Dimensions variable

This intervention was realized in August 1999 and August 2000 in the first Jewish Cemetery of Cuba, founded in 1906. With the consent of the family, the artist built a grave made of marble, ceramic, and bronze for Samuel Nisenbaum (1914-1995), a Jewish immigrant whose relatives had no money to give him a proper burial.

Almacén / Warehouse, 2001

Collaboration with Iván R. Basulto

Vídeo, sound

19:42 minutes

All works courtesy of the artist

Antonio Eligio Fernández “Tonel” (Havana, Cuba, 1958)
Lives and works in Vancouver, Canada
Education: University of Havana, School of Arts and Literature, Havana, Cuba (1982)
Grants: Rockefeller Foundation Fellowship (1997-98); John S. Guggenheim Foundation Fellowship (1995)
Selected Exhibitions: *Havana Biennial*, Havana, Cuba (1984, 1986, 1989, 1994, 2000 and 2003); *Cuba Siglo XX. Modernidad y Sincretismo*, Centro Atlántico de Arte Moderno, Cabildo de Gran Canaria, Spain (1996); *22nd Sao Paulo Bienal*, Sao Paulo, Brazil (1994)
Collections: Daros Latinamerica, Zurich, Switzerland; Ludwig Forum für Internationale Kunst, Aachen, Germany; Jack S. Blanton Museum of Art, The University of Texas at Austin, TX; National Museum of Fine Arts, Havana, Cuba

I spent the whole winter in Rheinland writing these boleros (Estuve todo el verano en Rheinland escribiendo estos boleros), 1999
Lithography
4 pieces: 16.5 x 11.7 inches each
Courtesy of the artist

Coco Fusco (New York, NY, 1960)
Lives and works in New York, NY
Education: MA, Modern Thought and Literature, Stanford University, Palo Alto, CA (1985); BA, Literature and Society and Semiotics, Brown University, Providence, RI (1982)
Grants: Herb Alpert Award in the Arts (2003); DASARTS; Arts Council of Andalusia; XTeresa Arte Alternativo (2002); Franklyn Furnace Fund for Performance Art (1998)
Selected Exhibitions: *A Room of One's Own: Women and Power in the New America*, P.S.122, New York, NY (2006); *VideoBrasil*, Sao Paulo, Brazil (2005); *inSITE*, San Diego, CA (2004-2005); *Shanghai Biennale*, Shanghai, China (2004); *Transmediale Festival*, Berlin, Germany (2003); *The Incredible Disappearing Woman*, Institute of Contemporary Art, London, UK (2003); *International Performance Festival*, Pancevo, Serbia (2003); *Whitney Biennial*, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY (1993); *Two Undiscovered Amerindian Visits the West*, University of California, Irvine, CA (1992)

Dolores from 10 to 10 (Dolores de 10 a 10), 2001
Video performance, loop
Courtesy of the artist and El Proyecto, New York, NY

Once upon a time in a not so faraway free trade zone at the northern edge of Mexico, a woman who cobbled machines together for a living was accused of trouble making at her job. Her boss locked her up in an office without food or water or a phone. He tried over and over to cajole her into signing a letter of resignation. He watched her to see if she would break down. She held out for twelve hours, and later sued the company. Her boss told the judge that she was crazy, and that the event never happened as no one would claim to have seen her. *Dolores from 10 to 10* is based on a story that no one saw.

Carlos Garaicoa (Havana, Cuba, 1967)
Lives and works in Madrid, Spain and Havana, Cuba
Education: Higher Institute of Art, Havana, Cuba (1994)
Grants: Katherine S. Marmor Award (2005); Yaddo Corporation, (1998); Art in General (1996); City of Biel-Bienne, Pro Helvetia and the Canton of Berne (1995); City of Düsseldorf and the Paul Pozzoza Museum (1993)
Selected Exhibitions: *New Photography*, Museum of Modern Art,

New York, NY (2005); *Inverting the Map: Latin American Art from the Tate Collection*, TATE, Liverpool, UK (2005); *51st Venice Biennial*, Venice, Italy (2005); *XXVI Sao Paulo Biennial*, Parque Ibirapuera, Brazil (2004); *Documenta 11, Platform 5*, Kassel, Germany (2002); *VI Havana Biennial*, Wifredo Lam Centre, Havana, Cuba (2001)
Selected Collections: National Museum of Fine Arts, Havana, Cuba; National Art Centre Reina Sofía, Madrid, Spain; Tate Modern, Liverpool, UK; Museum of Modern Art, New York NY; Guggenheim Museum, New York, NY

Grand Hotel: Babel Tower (Gran Hotel: Torre de Babel), 1991
Installation featuring public intervention, 6 photographs, object
Dimensions variable

39, 1991
Installation featuring public intervention, 3 photographs, object
Dimensions variable

Homage to San Carlos Hotel (Homenaje al Hotel San Carlos), 1991
Installation featuring public intervention, 4 photographs, object
Dimensions variable

Grand Hotel, 39 and Homage to San Carlos Hotel were public interventions of buildings in ruin that were once emblematic buildings in the city of Havana. The artist displayed objects and photographs related to its history.

Four Cubans, 1997
Video
98 minutes
All works courtesy of the artist and Lombard-Freid Projects, New York, NY

Fernando García (Puerto Padre, Cuba, 1955)
Lives and works in Miami, FL
Education: Higher Institute of Art, Havana, Cuba (1982)
Selected Exhibitions: La Boheme Gallery, Miami, FL (1999);* *Performances*, Miami Inter American Center, Miami, FL (1998);* *Contemporary Cuban Art*, Secretary of Commerce and Industrial Development, Mexico City, Mexico (1991)
Selected Collections: National Museum of Fine Arts, Havana, Cuba

¿Dónde está la jama? (Where is the food?), 2007
Performance
Courtesy of the artist

Parodying the stereotypical old Cuban exile from Miami, the artist enters the gallery on a wheelchair listening to an anti-Castro radio station, speaking against the “shitty” works in the exhibition, and asking for the food and drinks that are supposed to be served on the occasion of the event.

Alejandro González (Havana, Cuba, 1974)
Lives and works in Havana, Cuba
Education: Workshops by Edgar Moreno (1999), Luis González Palma (1997), Diego Golberg (1996)
Grants: Batiscafo Residency, Havana, Cuba (2006); Artist in Residence, Kunsthochschule für Medien Köln (2002)
Selected Exhibitions: *9th Havana Biennial*, Havana, Cuba (2006); *Flight/Vuelo*, Glasgow International Festival of Contemporary Vi-

sual Art, Gilmorehill G12 Theatre, Glasgow, Scotland (2006); *Utilitarian Dreams*, The Brighton Film Festival, CINECITY, Lighthouse, University of Brighton, UK (2005); *Memories of the Subsoil II*, Havana Gallery, Havana, Cuba (2004)*; *CUBA 1960-2000: Sogno e Relatà*, Fondazione Italiana per la Fotografia, Torino, Italy (2002); *Blackout*, Museum of Torreón City, Coahuila, Mexico (2000)*

Memories from the subsoil (Memorias del subsuelo), 2000
Lambda print
50 x 70 inches
Courtesy of the artist and Cristina Vives, Havana, Cuba

The photographs of Alejandro González record the unfinished projects and buildings in the district of Alamar, one of the symbols of the construction policy during the Revolution.

Juan-Si González (Santiago de Cuba, Cuba, 1959)
Lives and works in Yellow Springs, OH
Education: Higher Institute of Art, Havana, Cuba (1984)
Grants: Ohio Arts Council Fellowship Award (2004)
Selected Exhibitions: *Domino Effect*, The Frost Art Museum, Miami, FL (2006); *Breaking Barriers*, Fort Lauderdale Museum of Art, Fort Lauderdale, FL (1997)
Selected Collections: Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Havana, Cuba; Fort Lauderdale Museum of Art, Fort Lauderdale, FL; State University of New York at Buffalo Art Gallery, Buffalo, New York

Any Day (Un día Cualquiera), 1987
Performance, video documentation
3 minutes
Courtesy of the artist

Looking inside for Cuba: Psychological Territory #1 (Buscando dentro a Cuba. Territorio psicológico #1), 2001
Photography
4 pieces, 12.9 x 19 inches each
Courtesy of the artist

Looking inside for Cuba (2001-2006) is an ongoing performance project. The artist carries a tiny wooden house while visiting small villages named Cuba in different regions of the United States. He documents the visits and the landscape, including roads, traffic and advertising signs, and public and private buildings. *Psychological Territory #1* is a mosaic of photographs depicting one of those villages as a map printed on the artist's shirt, placing Cuba literally in his heart.

The Face of the Enemy (La cara del enemigo), 2007
Performance
Courtesy of the artist

The artist places a target with his self-portrait on it and invites the audience to hit his image by kicking a soccer ball imprinted with the flag of the United States.

Hexagon, Team of Collective Creation (Hexagono, Equipo de Creacion Colectiva)
Consuelo Castañeda, Humberto Castro, Abigail García Fayat, María Elena Morera, Antonio Eligio Fernández "Tonel", Ángel Sebastián Elizondo
Active: 1982-1985

Six friends visit a landscape (Seis amigos visitan un paisaje), 1982
Ephemeral installation. photographic documentation
7 photographs: 6 x 9 inches each
Courtesy of Consuelo Castañeda, Miami, FL

In this action, the group placed several personal objects on the grass, marked off with white rope, and created a sequence in which the people began to disappear from the area. The seventh picture shows some of the members of the group while they work on the piece.

van Gogh: An homage in Viñales (van Gogh: un homenaje en Viñales), 1982
Ephemeral installation. photographic documentation
4 photographs: 9.5 x 6.5 inches each
Courtesy of Consuelo Castañeda, Miami, FL

In a sequence of photographs the artist makes a bucket of flowers while personal objects appear and disappear on top of a chair. A white rope on the grass frames the compositions. The work pays homage to Vincent van Gogh.

Sand (Arena), 1982-1983
Ephemeral installation. photographic documentation
2 photographs: 7.5 x 10 inches each
Courtesy of Consuelo Castañeda, Miami, FL

Abdel Hernández (Havana, Cuba, 1968)
Lives and works in Havana, Cuba
Selected Exhibitions: *9th Havana Biennial*, Havana, Cuba (2006); *Artists in Trance*, Rice University, Houston, TX (1997)

Untitled (Sin título), 1988
Documentation of performance, black and white photographs
Photo credit: Adalberto Roque
Courtesy of Glexis Novoa

Surrounded by images of Jesus Christ, Ché Guevara, two missiles not yet detonated, and placards bearing his theoretical discourse, the artist remained lying face down reading a book. He welcomed visitors and had conversations with them in the style of a spiritual adviser. This performance took place during the opening of the exhibition *Ojo Pinta (Wet Paint)*, at L Gallery, University of Havana, Havana, Cuba.

Charles Juhasz-Alvarado (San Juan, Puerto Rico, 1965)
Lives and works in San Juan, Puerto Rico.
Education: Yale School of Art, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut (MFA, 1994; BA, 1988)
Selected Exhibitions: *Singapore Biennial*, Singapore City, Singapore (2006); *Moscow Biennial*, Moscow, Russia (2005); *2nd Prague Biennial*, Prague, Czech Republic (2005); *SSFuseum*, Fusebox Gallery, Washington, D.C. (2004); *8th Havana Biennial*, Havana, Cuba (2003); *Garden of Forbidden Fruit / DUTY FREE*, The Fabric Workshop and Museum, Philadelphia, PA (2002); *25th Sao Paulo Biennial*, Sao Paulo, Brazil (2002)

Under Construction Museum of Art of Puerto Rico (Aquí se construye el Museo de Arte de Puerto Rico; El comején nos hará mierda), 1998
Xerox, documentation of public intervention
Dimensions variable
Courtesy of the artist

Tony Labat (Havana, Cuba, 1951)

Lives and works in San Francisco, CA

Education: San Francisco Art Institute, San Francisco, CA (1980)

Grants: National Endowment for the Arts (1987, 2004); California Arts Council Grant (1992)

Selected Exhibition: *Trust Me, Retrospective*, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco, CA (2006); *VideoTime*, Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY (2002)

Fight: A Practical Romance, 1978

Performance documentation, sweat and blood on canvas

15 photos: 8 x 10 inches each

Courtesy of the artist

In Fight, 1981

Installation, video, and performance,

Dimensions variable

Labat became a licensed boxer. For an entire year, his San Francisco studio was turned into a boxing gym, open to the public.

Videos, 1976-1977

Video compilation

18 minutes

All works courtesy of the artist

Francisco Lastra Adorno (Caibarién, Cuba, 1963)

Lives and works in Mexico

Member of Provisional Group (1988-1989).

Education: Higher Institute of Art, Havana, Cuba (1987); National School of Art, Havana, Cuba (1982)

Selected Exhibitions: *Contenido neto: 2000 kg. de jabón rosa*, Museo Universitario del Chopo, Mexico City, Mexico (1997); *Cerrado por remodelación*, Museo Carrillo Gil, Mexico City, Mexico (1993)*; *Cangrejo*, Castle of the Royal Force, Havana, Cuba (1989)

Piñata, 1988

Performance. Black and White photographic documentation

Photos: Adalberto Roque

Dimensions variable

Courtesy of Glexis Novoa

A piñata in the shape of a cloud and a small house made of cardboard were installed in a room. The artist hid behind the house. The audience did not notice his presence until smoke began to emerge from the chimney. This stirred the curiosity of those present, and they began to look inside and interact through the windows. One visitor threw a lighted cigarette through the chimney, which caused the artist a painful burn. The artist then came out of the house to chide the visitor. It took place during the exhibition *It is not only what you see*, School of Arts and Letters, University of Havana, Havana, Cuba.

Net Weight: 2000 kg of pink soap (Contenido neto: 2000 kg. de jabón rosa), 1997

Ephemeral sculpture, photographic documentation, drawing

Dimensions variable

Courtesy of the artist

Glenda León (Havana, Cuba, 1976)

Lives and works in Cologne, Germany and Havana, Cuba

Member of DUPP Gallery (1999-2001)

Education: University of Havana, School of Arts and Literature, Havana, Cuba (1999)

Grants: Deutscher Akademischer Austausch Dienst (2006); Mattress Factory (2004); Pollock Krasner Foundation (2004)

Selected Exhibitions: *IV Bienal de Estandartes*, Centro Cultural de Tijuana, Tijuana, Mexico (2006); *Havana Biennial*, Havana, Cuba (2000, 2003, 2006)

Selected Collections: Centre George Pompidou, Paris, France; Rhode Island School of Design Museum of Art, Providence, RI

Each breath (Cada respiro), 2003

Video installation

1:53 minutes

Courtesy of the artist

Here is all distance, and there it was breathing (Rainer Maria Rilke)

There is an ignored longing for a state of freedom, for a feeling of belonging to the world. Sometimes art can reflect this state--this intrinsic power hidden for so long--the power of imagination, the power of living, the power of belonging, and the power of being in harmony. It is a remembrance of the magical capacity to transform things.

Alejandro López (Havana, Cuba, 1963)

Lives and works in New York, NY

Education: San Alejandro Academy of Fine Arts, Havana, Cuba (1986)

Selected Exhibitions: *Waiting List*, Mestna Galerija, Ljubljana, Slovenia (2006); *Odd Rhetoric Ode*, Haven Arts Gallery, Bronx, New York / The Warehouse Gallery, Washington D.C. (2006), *Artex*, New York (2004-2005); *The Great Theory*, Rice University, Houston, TX (1997)

Untitled: The Triumph of the New Hero is Collective, Bertold Brecht (Sin título: El triunfo del nuevo héroe es colectivo, Bertold Brecht), 1987

Performance documentation, photography

Dimensions variable

This performance took place in Copelia, a popular ice cream restaurant in central Vedado, Havana, Cuba. Super A is a superhero created to intervene in public spaces and interact with the general public. The artist designed the hero's costume using visual elements of political propaganda.

Meta Zero (Meta Cero), 1988

Performance documentation, photography

Dimensions variable

Commission for the Research of Historical Phenomena: The Strength of A Divine Breath (Comisión para la investigación de fenómenos históricos: La fuerza de ese aliento divino), 1989

Performance documentation, photography

Dimensions variable

This performance took place in a building under construction in Vedado, Havana, Cuba and lasted 4 months. The Department of Religious Affairs of the Central Committee, and functionaries of the Ministry of Culture eventually censored it. The artist was charged with religious proselytism.

Basis for a Theory of the Parapsychology of Art (Fundamentos de la teoría de la parapsicología del arte), 1989

Performance documentation, photography

Dimensions variable

Hypnotic Opera (Opera Hipnoide), 1989
Performance documentation, photography
Dimensions variable

Bunker of Thoughts (Bastión de pensamientos), 2006
Sculpture, metal, wood, bricks, bulbs, power
Dimensions variable

Hedonist of the Psyche (Hedonista de la Psique), 2006
Window installation
Dimensions variable

Odd Rhetoric Ode, 2006
Performance documentation, video
All works courtesy of the artist

Rafael López Ramos (Sancti Spiritus, Cuba, 1962)

Lives and works in Miami, FL
Education: Higher Institute of Art, Havana, Cuba (1991); San Alejandro Academy of Fine Arts, Havana, Cuba (1985)
Selected Exhibitions: *Cuban Art outside Cuba*, State University of New York at Buffalo, Buffalo, NY (2006); *Recent Works*, Petley Jones Gallery, Vancouver, Canada (2003)*; *Café III: The Journey of Cuban artists*, Arizona State University, Phoenix, AZ (2003); *Junge Kunst aus Cuba*, Museum Friedrichshof, Zurlndorf, Austria (2001); *El objeto esculpado*, Center for the Development of the Visual Arts, Havana, Cuba (1990)

Cuban Culture Day (Jornada de la Cultura Cubana), 1989-2007
Collage and vegetable fiber on cardboard
38 x 32 inches
Courtesy of the artist

In this remake of a work dated in 1989, the artist recalls all the ingredients necessary to prepare a Cuban Culture Day. This type of event was one of the ways in which former socialist countries developed cultural exchange.

Meditate (Meditar), Collaborative Project, 1988
Participants: Lirca Catusus, Abdel Hernández, Rafael López Ramos, Hubert Moreno, Teresa Ortiz, Ciro Quintana, Arnold Rodríguez (Peteco), Lázaro Saavedra, Alejandro López, José Luís Alonso Mateo, Luis Gómez, Nilo Castillo and others.
Mural, photographic documentation, memorabilia
Courtesy of Rafael López Ramos and Glexis Novoa

During the celebrations of Che Guevara's 60th birthday, a group of artists, using their hands (and no brushes), painted a huge sign with the word "meditar" (meditate) intended to provoke thought at the Revolution Square, the same place where the most important speeches of the Revolution were delivered. The work was controversial from the beginning and was celebrated as a sure step towards a "rapprochement" between art and power. Originally, artists had proposed to write the phrase "Reviva la Revolu..." (Revive the Revolu...), but authorities did not grant permission. As a result, Carlos Rodríguez Cárdenas and Glexis Novoa withdrew from the project.

Aldo Menéndez (Cienfuegos, Cuba, 1948)

Lives and works in Miami, FL
Fundador del Taller de Serigrafía René Portocarrero (1983)
Education: National School of Art, Havana, Cuba (1968)
Selected Exhibitions: *The Illustrated Book. A Marriage of Science and Art*, The Gallery at Green Library, Florida International University, Frost Art Museum, Miami, FL (2005); *Ojo X Ojo*, Sonos Gallery, New York, NY / Durban Segnini, Miami, FL (2002); *Cuban*

Performance Art of the 80's (The Chronology), Miami Dade Community Collage Gallery, Miami, FL (1998)

The Work Arrives After You Do (La Obra Llega Despues De Usted), 1982
Performance, black and white photographic documentation,
Dimensions variable
Courtesy of the artist

This performance took place at the Havana Gallery, Havana, Cuba. The artist, who also was the organizer of the exhibition, invited other artists (fifty in total) to come the day of the opening and install their works in front of the viewers.

Béverly Mojena (Santiago de Cuba, Cuba, 1977)

Lives and works in Havana, Cuba
Education: Higher Institute of Art, Havana, Cuba (2001); Professional School of Art, Santiago de Cuba, Cuba (1996)
Grants: United Nations Educational and Scientific Cultural Organization
Selected Exhibitions: *Havana Biennial*, Havana, Cuba (2003, 2006); *Boutique*, Center for the Development of the Visual Arts, Havana, Cuba (2003)*; *Beverly Top Plastic National*, Commercial Center of Galiano, Havana, Cuba (2001)*; *7th Havana Biennial*, Havana, Cuba (2000); *Ana Mendieta Performance Festival*, UNEAC, Havana, Cuba (1998, 1999)

From the series *Beverly Top Plastic*, 2000
Window installation, objects made out of plastic bags
Dimensions variable
Courtesy of the artist

Founded by the artist, *Beverly Top Plastic* is a fashion line that uses recycled plastic bags from shops. It is based on a critique of the commodification of the body, which appears to be contained by the plastic shopping bags. The poverty of the material contrasts with the glamour of the presentation. Mojena designs catalogs, invites the models to show clothes on the catwalks, and creates bold montages. Each piece of clothing is sold as a work of art and not as a mere pair of shoes or a dress. These are designer items, brand names.

Maritza Molina (Havana, Cuba)

Lives and works in Miami, FL
Education: Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, RI (1998); Miami Dade College, Miami, FL (1995)
Grants: Artist Access Grant, Miami-Dade Department of Cultural Affairs and Tigertail Prod
Selected Exhibition: *Carrying Traditions*, Leonard Tachmes Gallery, Miami, FL (2005-2006)*; *L Factor*, Exit Art, New York, NY (2004); *Performance Art in Contemporary America*, Polk Museum of Art, Lakeland, FL (2004)
Selected Collections: Bass Museum of Art, Miami Beach, FL

Carrying tradition #2 (Acarreando la tradición #2), 2005
Photography
50 x 40 inches

Cutting the pattern (Cortando el patrón), 2005
Photography
40 x 50 inches

Carrying tradition, 2006
Video
3 minutes

Conquering, 2006
Video
3 minutes
All works courtesy of the artist

Aldito Menéndez (Havana, Cuba, 1971)
Lives and works in Madrid, Spain
Founding member of Arte Calle Group
Active: 1988-1989
Grants: Batiscafo Project (2005)
Selected Exhibitions: *9th Havana Biennial*, Havana, Cuba (2006)

The Indian (El Indio), 1988
Performance documentation, photography, ephemera
Photos credit: Adalberto Roque
Courtesy of Glexis Novoa, Miami, FL

During a lecture by Robert Rauschenberg at the National Museum of Fine Arts, packed with viewers and the press, Menéndez appeared almost naked, dressed up as a Caribbean native, carrying a bow and arrow. He sat on the floor, in the first row, in front of the famous artist for the entire duration of the lecture, witnessing the lecture without saying a word or making any movements.

Glexis Novoa (Holguin, Cuba, 1964)
Lives and works in Miami, FL and Havana, Cuba
Education: Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture, Skowhegan, ME (1998); National School of Art, Havana, Cuba (1984)
Grants: Cintas Fellowship (2006)
Selected Exhibitions: *Visionary Artist*, Lowe Art Museum, Miami, FL (2006); *Havana Biennial*, Havana, Cuba (1989, 2000); *Cuba Siglo XX. Modernidad y Sincretismo*, Centro Atlántico de Arte Moderno, Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, Spain; *Kuba O.K. Aktuelle Kunst aus Kuba*, Städtische Kunsthalle Düsseldorf, Dusseldorf, Germany (1990)
Collections: Ludwig Forum für Internationale Kunst, Aachen, Germany; National Museum of Fine Arts, Havana, Cuba; Museum of Art, Fort Lauderdale, FL

At the end, they all dance together (Al final todos bailan juntos), 1986
Performance documentation, photography, costume in cotton and wire
Dimensions variable
Photos credit: Nicolás Delgado and Rafael

In collaboration with Cívico group, the artist organized a competition-like choreography. The performance started on the street and lasted for approximately two hours. It ended up inside the L Gallery, where an exhibition was taking place.

Twenty-some Aprils (Veintitanto Abriles), 1987
Silkscreen
Posters: 21.5 x 31.5 inches and 19 x 28.2 inches
Invite: 8 x 10 inches

To Be or not to Be (Glexis Novoa, Romantic Period), 1988
Silkscreen
24.7 x 12.2 inches

It's not only what you see (No es solo lo que ves), 1988
Performance documentation, photography, costume
9 pieces: 6 x 8 inches each

In the exhibition space, the artist restricted access to the University's auditorium using a white sheet of paper where he wrote the phrase, "It's not just what you see." A monitor showed a heavy metal video featuring the bands Venom, Metallica and Slayer. A few minutes later, while the audience was watching the video, the artist suddenly cut through the paper and barged in, wielding a knife. He tore off his rocker's costume and pulled out cow's entrails from his "stomach," dripping blood onto the floor. He threw himself on the ground and rolled in the puddle then quietly walked away.

Concierto (Concert, with Gustavo Pérez Monzón), 1988
Performance documentation, photography
Dimensions variable

As part of the exhibition *18 Days* at the Centre for Visual Arts and Design in Havana, Novoa asked Pérez Monzón to join him in a performance with a piano. They sat at the piano and tested the microphone repeatedly, challenging the patience of the audience.

Untitled. Practical Period (Sin título. Etapa práctica): Adriano, Ana Albertina, Lázaro, Magdalena, Tomás, Tonel, Flavio, 1991-2007
Installation, wood, paint, digital clock
Dimensions variable

Honorary Guest (Invitado de honor), 2007
Performance with Asael Rosales (Fidel Castro), George Sánchez-Calderón (bodyguard 1), Martín Ferrán (bodyguard 2), Kaira Cabañas (bodyguard 3). make up artist: Marcus Mer
Video documentation
Dimensions variable
All works courtesy of the artist

Antonio Núñez (Camagüey, Cuba, 1971)
Lives and works in Aachen, Germany
Education: Higher Institute of Art, Havana, Cuba (1998); Professional School of Art, Camaguey, Cuba (1990)
Grants: Artist-in-Residence, Ludwig Forum für Internationale Kunst (2001); ProHelvetia Creative Fellowship, Ministry of Culture in Switzerland; School of Fine Arts in Sierre du Valais (1998)
Selected Exhibitions: *Pop-up*, Kunstachse NRW, Brühler Kunstverein, Brühl, Germany (2006)*; *Art from Cuba*, The Ludwig Collection State Museum, St. Petersburg, Russia (2002); *The truths of Pinocchio*, Studio, Ludwig Forum für Internationale Kunst, Aachen, Germany / 23 and 10 Gallery, Havana, Cuba (2001)*; *La Direction du Regard*, Stadhaus, Zurich, Switzerland / Musée de Beaux Arts, La Chaux de Fonds, Switzerland (1998)
Selected Collections: National Museum of Fine Arts, Havana, Cuba; Ludwig Forum für Internationale Kunst, Aachen, Germany

Nobody's child (Niño de nadie), 1997-2005
Installation, wood, printed canvases
Dimensions variable
Courtesy of the artist

A series of small folding cots, such as the ones used in school to force children to take naps, portrays a repertory of disturbing images: faceless children and children's faces on adult bodies, twisted or in violent positions. Núñez metaphorically represents the deformations of education and behavior when individuals are forced to comply with uniformity.

Ordo Amoris Cabinet (Gavinete Ordo Amoris)
Francis Acea, Juan Bernal (until 1996),
Diango Hernández, Manuel Piña (until 1996), **Ernesto Oroza** (until 1997)
Active: 1994-2003

Ordo Amoris Collection (Colección Ordo Amoris), 1994-2006
Window installation, found assembled and functional objects
Dimensions variable
Courtesy of Ernesto Oroza, Aventura, FL

The group Ordo Amoris collected functional objects and studied their design. The catalog of the objects created to provisionally substitute others is impressive. Some are produced by recycling industrial materials and others are ingenious adaptations of other objects. This innovative practice spread throughout the Cuban population starting with the 1990s crisis. It allowed many people to survive by selling these objects in self-run businesses or microenterprises. Ordo Amoris sees them as the expression of a popular aesthetic that because of its persistence has shaped the tastes and consumption patterns of Cubans.

Ernesto Oroza (Havana, Cuba, 1968)

Lives and works in Aventura, FL and Havana, Cuba
Member of Ordo Amoris Cabinet (1994-1996)
Education: Higher Institute of Industrial Design, Havana, Cuba (1993); Polytechnic Institute of Design, Havana, Cuba (1988)
Grants: Guggenheim Fellowship (2007); International Exchange Studio Program, Christoph Merian Foundation (2006); Danish Center for Cultural Development (2005); Ludwig Foundation of Cuba (2001-2004); Direction aux Arts Plastiques (1999-2000)
Selected Exhibitions: Anestesia, Miramar Trade Center, Havana, Cuba (2007)*; Enjoy; Project Circo, La Tropical, 9th Havana Biennial, Havana, Cuba (2006); Technological disobedience, 4th Saint-Etienne International Design Biennial, Saint-Etienne, France (2006)*; SAFE: Design Takes On Risk, Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY (2005); Agua con azúcar y La muestra provisional, Center for the Development of the Visual Arts, Havana, Cuba / Museum of Contemporary Art and Design, San José, Costa Rica (1996); Una de cada clase (One of a Kind), Ludwig Foundation of Cuba, Havana, Cuba (1995)

Provisional jewels (Joyas provisionales), 2002
Mixed media, found objects
3 x 14 x 14 inches

Provisional enemy (Enemigo provisional), 2004
Video, sound
Music: Descemer Bueno
2:54 minutes

Amnesia, 2006
Collaboration with Magdiel Aspillaga and Asori Soto
Video
8 minutes
All works courtesy of the artist

Cristina Padura Rosell (Havana, Cuba, 1959)

Lives and works in Havana, Cuba
Education: San Alejandro Academy of Fine Arts, Havana, Cuba (1978-1982); National School of Graphic Design, Havana, Cuba (1976-1978)
Selected Exhibitions: London Biennial, Worn Contagion, Grupo Sinestético, London, UK (2004); Residuos, Espacio Aglutinador, Havana, Cuba (2003)*; Contemporary Art from Latin America and the Caribbean: Independent Projects, Proa Foundation, Buenos Aires, Argentina (2003); Fe-minus, Fototeca de Cuba, Havana, Cuba (2001); Una Miseria Temporal, Espacio Aglutinador, Havana, Cuba (1997)

Residual (Residuos), 2001
Menstrual blood on paper
2 pieces: 20 x 24 inches each
Courtesy of the artist

Alain Pino (Camagüey, Cuba, 1975)

Lives and works in Havana, Cuba
Education: Higher Institute of Art, Havana, Cuba (1999); Professional School of Visual Arts, Camagüey, Cuba (1994)
Grants: Workshop, Boston Architectural College (2003)
Selected Exhibitions: Cosmos, Havana Gallery, Havana, Cuba (2007); Havana Science Fiction, Museum of Contemporary Art, Washington, DC / Bronx River Art Center, Bronx, NY (2004-2005); 8th Havana Biennial, Havana, Cuba (2003); From the Negative. Parts Photographic Art, Minneapolis, MN / North Dakota Museum of Art, Grand Forks, ND (2000-2001); El Poder de Narra, Museo de Castellón, Castellón, Spain (2000).
Selected Collections: Barbara Farber Gallery, Trets, France; Pierre Huber, Art in Public, Geneva, Switzerland; Antonio Pérez Foundation, Cuenca, Spain; Free University of Brussels, Brussels, Belgium

Time goes by (El tiempo pasa), 2006
Photography
Tryptich: 41 x 31 inches each
Courtesy of the artist

A girl, a woman, and an old lady wear beards made out of shaving foam.

Humberto Planas (Santiago, Cuba, 1975)

Lives and works in Athens, Greece
Education: Higher Institute of Art, Havana, Cuba; Professional School of Art, Santiago de Cuba
Grants: Ludwig Foundation of Cuba
Selected Exhibitions: wem ich begegnet bin, K4 Projects, Saarbrücken, Germany (2003); Intercambio sin ser conocido, Humboldt House, Havana, Cuba / Hochschulrundgang der HBK Saar, Saarbrücken, Germany (2000-2001)

Untitled, 2006
Public interventions, photographic documentation
Dimensions variable
Courtesy of the artist

Planas produces sculptures using timber in outdoor spaces, simulating the construction of monuments or structures that were apparently being built only to be later dismantled, frustrating the expectations of the public and leaving the bitter aftertaste of illusion.

Segundo Planes (Pinar del Río, Cuba, 1965)

Lives and works in Miami, FL
Education: Higher Institute of Art, Havana, Cuba (1989); National School of Art, Havana, Cuba (1983)
Selected Exhibitions: *Segundo Planes: Memorias del Circo*, Instituto de América / Centro Damián Bayón de Santa Fe, Granada, Espana (2003); *15th Cuenca Biennial*, Museum of Modern Art of Cuenca, Cuenca, Ecuador (1998); *Cuba Siglo XX: Modernidad y Sincretismo*, Centro Atlántico de Arte Contemporáneo, Las Palmas de Gran Canarias, Spain (1996); *Huellas Tóxicas de Sombra de Dios*, Galería Ramis Barquet, Monterrey, Mexico (1993)*; *Kuba OK*, Standtische Kunsthalle, Dusseldorf, Germany (1990)
Selected Collections: National Museum of Fine Arts, Havana, Cuba

Killing the onyric (Asesinando lo onírico), 1983

Performance documentation, photography

4 pieces: 4 x 6 inches each

Courtesy of the artist

The action consisted of a guessing game conducted from inside a clock as an emblem of time, dream, and reality. Twelve mosquito nets simulating beds form a clock. The nets hide an object. A person stands in front of the net waiting for his/her turn. From a bunk bed in the center, the artist questioned each person separately, creating ahead of time a story about the object that each bed hides. Up until that point, the participants were blindfolded so they could not see the object or the person next to them. The game lasted approximately 20 minutes.

Life is shit and the world is mad (La vida es una mierda y el mundo está loco), 1983

Performance documentation, photography

9 pieces: 8 x 10 inches each

Courtesy of the artist

Turning his graduation thesis into a performance, Planes presented his essay on a roll of toilet paper, which he unrolled as he read. He threw eggs during the breaks and would explain his theory using domestic objects. On the table there were pieces of bread that the artist ate during the performance.

Provisional Group

Alejandro Acosta, Francisco Lastra, Glexis Novoa and Carlos Rodríguez Cárdenas

Active: 1988-1989

Selected Exhibition: *Wet Paint (Ojo pinta)*, L Gallery, Havana, Cuba (1988)

Country Rock (Rock campesino), 1988

Performance and video installation documentation

Photography, object, ephemera, serigraphy on paper

Photos: Adalberto Roque

Participants: Alejandro Acosta, Francisco Lastra, Glexis Novoa and Carlos Rodríguez Cárdenas

Courtesy of Glexis Novoa

A monitor displayed clips from a TV program about traditional country music from Cuba, Palmas, y Cañas. Wearing the traditional attire of guayabera shirts and straw hats and imitating a musical quartet with guitars, claves, and bongos, members of Provisional attempted to ironically provoke the art group Arte Calle, who in turn were rockers in their appearance and attitude.

Very good, Rauschenberg, 1988

Performance documentation, photography, ephemera

Photos credit: Adalberto Roque

Participants: Francisco Lastra, Glexis Novoa and Carlos Rodríguez Cárdenas

Courtesy of Glexis Novoa

During a lecture by Robert Rauschenberg at the National Museum of Fine Arts, the artist group Provisional, in front of the audience and press, interrupted the proceedings to insistently ask for Rauschenberg's autograph, forcing the famous artist to sign a placard with a paintbrush, thus increasing the value of the souvenir. As he signed the card, they raised a sign with the image of an Indian and a cartoon speech bubble that read "Very good, Rauschenberg," as an ironic commentary on the phenomenon of cultural colonialism.

Japan (Japón), 1989

Performance documentation, photography, object, serigraphy on paper

4 photos: 8 x 11 inches each

Participants: Alejandro Acosta, Glexis Novoa and Carlos Rodríguez Cárdenas

Courtesy of Glexis Novoa and Aldo Menéndez, Miami, FL

This performance took place during a panel on "The Concept of Art" hosted by the Union of Cuban Writers and Artists, Havana, Cuba. Provisional interrupted the panel in order to deliver prizes to artists and critics present at the event. The honor ceremony started with Novoa seizing the microphone from one of the speakers, and asking Acosta (a 10 year old boy), "How is Mosquera (the honoree)?" Acosta and Novoa yelled in unison, "Japón (Japan)!" The prize implied an analogy between the quality of Japanese products and the merit of the honorees. The trophy was a print by Rodríguez Cárdenas.

Ernesto Pujol (Havana, Cuba, 1957)

Lives and works in New York, NY

Education: Hunter College, City University of New York, New York, NY (1990); University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras, Puerto Rico (1979)

Grants: Pollock Krasner Foundation (1993, 1998), Joan Mitchell Foundation (1997); Cintas Foundation (1991, 1997); Mid-Atlantic Arts Foundation (1994)

Selected Exhibitions: *Walk#1*, McNay Art Museum, San Antonio, TX (2006)*; *Puerto Rico '00*, M&M Proyectos, San Juan, Puerto Rico (2000); *7th Havana Biennial*, Havana, Cuba (1997); *The children of Peter Pan*, Casa de las Américas, Havana, Cuba (1995)*

Selected Collections: Herbert F. Johnson Museum, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY; Museum of Contemporary Art, San Diego, CA; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, CA; Museo Rufino Tamayo, Mexico City, Mexico

Mourning Circle (Círculo de duelo), 2006

Video, sound

7 minutes

Courtesy of the artist

This video was produced after the performance *Mourning Circle #2*, which took place at the Marcia and Otto Koehler Fountain of the McNay Art Museum, San Antonio, TX, during the summer of 2006. The performance continued a series of works dealing with the act of mourning, and consisted of a walk around in a circle while crying. The walk lasted a half hour.

Rigoberto Quintana (Matanzas, Cuba, 1965)

Lives and works in San Juan, Puerto Rico

Education: Higher Institute of Art, Havana, Cuba (1989)

Selected Exhibitions: *Video/installation*, University of the Sacred Heart, San Juan, Puerto Rico (2007)*; *Disciples*, Museum of Contemporary Art, San Juan, Puerto Rico (2005)*; *The Work*, University of the Sacred Heart, San Juan, Puerto Rico (2001)*

Selected Collections: National Museum of Fine Arts, Havana, Cuba; Museum of Contemporary Art, San Juan, Puerto Rico

No soy un extraño (I am not a stranger), 1988

Performance documentation, photography

Dimensions variable

Collaboration with Guillermo Malberti

Courtesy of the artist

This is the first performance that received a prize at an art salon in Cuba (National Salon of the Awardees, Center for the Development of the Visual Arts, Havana, Cuba). The artist used a colleague as an actor for his work, a parody of the Stations of the Cross. It ended up in violent actions that destroyed many of the components of the installation.

Cuban Calendar (Calendario Cubano), 2006

Digital print

11 x 9 inches

Courtesy of Jerome O'Neill, San Juan, Puerto Rico

The work is an image of an inert Fidel Castro which fades as the years pass on. This Cuban calendar depicts an obsession with the Cuban exile.

Rubert Quintana (Holguín, Cuba, 1975)

Lives and works in Holguín, Cuba

Member of ENEMA Collective (2000-2003)

Education: Higher Institute of Art, Havana, Cuba (2005); Professional School of Art, Holguín, Cuba (2000)

Selected Exhibitions: City Hall of Visual Arts, Holguín, Cuba (2007); *Reflections*, Higher Institute of Art, Havana, Cuba (2005)*; *Palmas Reales*, Gallery Servando Cabrera Moreno, Havana, Cuba (2004)*; *Fluorescence*, School of Arts and Letters, Havana, Cuba (2004); *8th Havana Biennial* (ENEMA Collective), Wifredo Lam Center, Havana, Cuba (2003)

All the Glory of the World (Toda la gloria del mundo), 1999

Mixed media on dried corn on paper

5 pieces: 28 x 20 inches each

Courtesy of the artist

The title alludes to a well-known phrase by José Martí, the national Cuban hero, "All the glory in the world fits into a kernel of corn," which is also the title of a published interview with Fidel Castro. Quintana reflects on the notion of transcendence based on the various words historically associated with it.

Ángel Ricardo Ríos (Holguín, Cuba 1965)

Lives and works in Mexico City, Mexico

Education: Higher Institute of Art, Havana, Cuba (1989); San Alejandro Academy of Fine Arts, Havana, Cuba (1984)

Selected Exhibitions: *Formas cotidianas*, Galería de la Secretaría de Hacienda y Crédito Público, Mexico City, Mexico (2005); *Mexican Report*, Contemporary Art from Mexico, Blue-Star Contemporary Art Center, San Antonio, TX (2004); *8th Havana Biennial*, Havana, Cuba (2003); *11th Bienal Rufino Tamayo*, Museum Rufino Tamayo, México City, Mexico (2002); *Erógena*, Stedelijk Museum voor Actuele Kunst, Gent, Belgium (2000)

Pyramids (Pirámides), 1987

Performance documentation, photocopies, ephemera

Dimensions variable

Courtesy of the artist

In this cold, schematic intervention in the landscape, a series of pyramids were built in the gardens of the Higher Institute of Art. The structures invited viewers to enter an underground tunnel that led to their interiors, which displayed aggressive and organic references.

Untitled: 3000 candles (Sin título: 3000 velas), 1988

Performance documentation, photocopies, ephemera

Dimensions variable

Courtesy of the artist

The artist placed black boxes full of hand-made red candles on the floor of the gallery. Then, he invited the viewers to open a box, pick up a candle, light it, and place it on any of the marks he had previ-

ously made on the floor. The performance took place at L Gallery, Havana, Cuba.

Untitled: Penetrable space (Sin título: Espacio penetrable), 1988

Installation documentation, photocopies, ephemera

Dimensions variable

Courtesy of the artist

Ríos modifies the gallery space (Center for the Development of the Visual Arts) by building a red wall. A peculiar crack invited the viewer to enter the cramped tunnel that led to the other side of the room. There, the viewer would encounter an entirely different aesthetic project.

(Ritual) Art.De (Art-Rights)

Juan-Si González, Jorge Crespo, Eliseo Valdez, Marco Antonio Abad, Cesar González, Adalberto Roque, Amaury Suárez

Art.De was founded in 1988 and changed its name to Ritual Art. De in 1989.

Selected Projects:

Magnet (Imán), Series of performances, Havana, Cuba

Re-union (Re-uni6n), Series of performances, Presidents Park, Havana, Cuba

Temporary convivence (Con-Vivencia temporal), Galeano Street, Havana, Cuba**

Archaeology of History (Arqueología de la historia), Series of performances, Streets of Havana, Cuba (1991)***

* Censored by the State Security

**Censored by the Ministry of Culture

*** Jorge Crespo and Marco A. Abad were tried and sentenced to two years of prison

They've screwed up my spirit (Me han jodido el ánimo), 1988

Performance documentation, photography

Performer: Juan-Si González

Photos credit: Adalberto Roque

Dimensions variable

Courtesy of the artist

As part of a series of performances that took place every Wednesday in a park on the corner of G at 23rd Streets, artist Juan-Si González wrapped himself in a large plastic bag and suffocated until a viewer tore the plastic.

A role model (Un modelo a seguir), 1988

Performance documentation, photography

Performer: Juan-Si González

Photos credit: Adalberto Roque

Dimensions variable

Courtesy of the artist

This performance took place at the National Museum of Fine Arts, Havana, Cuba as part of the exhibition *Suave y Fresco (Cool and Fresh)*.

A palabras necias, la silenciosa, sangrante, santa, oreja de Van Gogh, 1988

Performance documentation, photography

Dimensions variable

Courtesy of the artist

This performance took place at the Union of Writers and Artists of Cuba, Havana, Cuba. The State Security detained artists.

Iman Project, 1989

Performance documentation, photography, video, costume

Aluminum paper wrapping: Jorge Crespo

Sandwich bans photographs: Adalberto Roque

Dimensions variable

Courtesy of Juan-Si González

Untitled, 1989
Ink on paper
Mural by Jorge Crespo and Juan-Si González
9 pieces, overall: 96 x 78 inches
Courtesy of Juan-Si González

This is probably the only mural by Ritual Art.De that was not destroyed by the police.

Carlos Rodríguez Cárdenas (Sancti Spiritus, Cuba, 1962)
Lives and works in Union City, NJ
Education: Higher Institute of Art, Havana, Cuba (1986)
Selected Exhibitions: *El Museo's Bienal: The (S) Files 007*, El Museo del Barrio, New York, NY (2007); *Art from Cuba. The Ludwig Collection*, State Museum, St. Petersburg, Russia (2002); *Cuba Siglo XX. Modernidad y Sincretismo*, Centro Atlántico de Arte Moderno, Gran Canaria, Spain (1996); *Ante America*, Biblioteca Luis Angel Arango, Bogota, Colombia (1992); *Kuba OK*, Städtische Kunsthalle, Düsseldorf, Germany (1990)
Selected Collections: National Museum of Fine Arts, Havana, Cuba / Ludwig Forum für Internationale Kunst, Aachen, Germany / Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY

Untitled, 1986-2007
Stickers on ceiling and wall
Dimensions variable
Courtesy of the artist

Fresh Air Disturbed by a Hurricane (Aire fresco molestado por un huracán), 1987
Performance documentation, poster
Dimensions variable
Courtesy of the artist

This is perhaps the only known "sound action" of the decade. It took place at La Casona, Fondo Cubano de Bienes Culturales, Havana on April 9, 1987. The artist turned off all the lights of the gallery building and set off a jarring alarm bell for more than 30 minutes while the audience grew anxious trying to figure out what "should happen" during the action.

No por mucho madrugar amanece más temprano, 1988
Silkscreen poster
21.2 x 25.7 inches
Courtesy of Glexis Novoa

The more we save, the more we will have (Ahorrando más tendremos más), 1988
Silkscreen poster
27.5 x 19.5 inches
Courtesy of Glexis Novoa and René Francisco

Affordable original works (Originales fáciles de adquirir), 1988
Performance documentation, objects, posters
3 black and white photographs: 8 x 6 inches
Ink on paper: 18 x 27.5 inches
Cement on silkscreen poster: 27.5 x 19.5 inches
Dimensions variable
Courtesy of Glexis Novoa

Parodying political slogans, the artist prepared a silkscreened sign announcing his performance: "Men at work. Easy-to-acquire originals being built here." The sign represented a brick wall with objects related to construction such as a helmet, tools, etc. Making his way through the audience, he entered the hall dressed as a construction worker, pushing a wheel barrow full of bricks

and cement mix which he smeared on each of the dashing "easy-to-acquire originals." He later distributed the bricks to visitors as presents.

Fernando Rodríguez (Matanzas, Cuba, 1970)
Lives and works in Havana, Cuba
Education: Higher Institute of Art, Havana, Cuba (1994); National School of Art, Havana, Cuba (1989)
Grants: Artist's Studio, Tel Aviv (2001); Artist's Residency; The University of Cincinnati (2001); Barbican Center (1999); Glassworks Studios (1995)
Selected Exhibitions: *Havana Biennial*, Havana, Cuba (1994, 2003, 2006); *Il Tirana Biennial*, Tirana, Albania (2003); *2 x 1 = x. Fernando Rodríguez / Francisco de la Cal*, Iturralde Gallery, Los Angeles, CA (2002)*; *Trabajando p'al inglés*, Concourse Gallery, Barbican Center, London, UK (1999); *La Dirección de la Mirada*, Stadthaus, Zürich, Switzerland / Musée des Beaux-Arts, La Chaux-de-Fonds, Switzerland (1998); *Una de Cada Clase*, Ludwig Foundation of Cuba, Havana, Cuba / Centro Nacional de Conservación, Restauración y Museología, Havana, Cuba (1995)
Selected Collections: Ludwig Forum für Internationale Kunst, Aachen, Germany; National Museum of Fine Arts, Havana, Cuba; Arizona State University Museum, Tempe, AZ

The necessary pruning (La poda necesaria), 1997
Sculpture, wood, rusted metal, acrylic
Dimensions variable
Courtesy of Paul Hertz and Jamie Rauchman, New York, NY

Francisco de la Cal is a fictional character created by Fernando Rodríguez in 1991. De la Cal is a peasant and naïve artist from the Ciénaga de Zapata who lost his vision in 1959. He asks Rodríguez to help him make his art. Thus, Rodríguez illustrates De la Cal's ideas, which frequently mirror some important ideological aspects of the Revolution, such as collectivism, massification, and productivity. Idea and image often represent a contradiction due to the gap between De la Cal's naïve expectations and reality. In *The necessary pruning*, the act of pruning becomes an agricultural metaphor for social and political mutilation of homegrown trees.

From the series of a collective experience: Black and White (De la serie de un experiencia colectiva: Blanco y Negro), 1998
Watercolor on paper
30 x 44 inches
Courtesy of the artist and Iturralde Gallery, Los Angeles, CA
Black and White belongs to a series of works in which Rodríguez and De la Cal propose solutions; formal, social and artistic which imply sacrifices for the sake of the collective experience.

Modern Times (Tiempos modernos), 2006
Video animation, sound
Animation: Yoel Alegre
2:14 minutes
Courtesy of the artist and Cristina Vives, Havana, Cuba

René Francisco Rodríguez (Holguín, Cuba, 1960)
Lives and works in Havana, Cuba
Member of duo René Francisco and Ponjuán (1988-1995); Founder of DUPP Gallery (1999)
Education: Higher Institute of Art, Havana, Cuba (1987); National School of Arts, Havana, Cuba (1982)
Grants: Cuban Artists Fund (2004); Mattress Factory (2004); Schloss Wiepersdorf (2003); Honorary Doctorate of Fine Art, San Francisco Art Institute (2001); Hersliya Artists Residence (1999);

Ludwig Forum for International Art (1996)
Selected Exhibitions: *52nd Venice Biennial*, Venice, Italy (2007); *Havana Biennial*, Havana, Cuba (2006, 2003); *Lista de Espera*, Nina Menocal Gallery, Mexico City, Mexico (2005)*; *26th Sao Paulo Biennial*, Sao Paulo, Brazil (2004); *Ajuste de cuentas*, National Museum of Fine Arts, Havana, Cuba (2003)*; *With eyes of stone and water*, Helsinki City Art Museum, Helsinki, Finland (2002); *Tubosutra*, Goch Museum, Goch, Germany (2001)*; *48th Venice Biennial*, Venice, Italy (1998); *La dirección de la mirada*, Museum of Fine Arts, La Chaux de Fonds, Switzerland (1997); *El objeto esculpado*, Centre for the Development of Visual Arts, Havana, Cuba (1990); *Artista Melodramático (Melodramatic Artist)*, *Castle of the Royal Force*, Havana, Cuba (1989)

From a pedagogic praxis (Desde una pragmática pedagógica), 1990-2006
Installation, painted canvas, video projection
Canvas: 106 x 51 x 4 inches
Dimensions variable
Courtesy of the artist

Happy 1990 features documentary material on the first edition of Rodríguez's pedagogical project *Desde una Pragmática Pedagógica (From Pedagogic Pragmatics, or DUPP)*. Founded in 1989, it has involved various generations of students from the Higher Institute of Art, thus promoting the possibility of dialogue among individual poetics by collective actions. DUPP has realized public interventions and group shows in different spaces of the city (private houses, a department store, an avenue, etc.)

René Francisco Rodríguez and Francisco Lastra

A buen entendedor, pocas palabras, 1988
Silkscreen on paper
11.5 x 8.2 inches
Design: Francisco Lastra
Courtesy of Glexis Novoa

Parodying a hurdle race, the artists presented themselves as athletes in a simulated competition outside an exhibition that they were not invited to (*No por mucho madrugar, amanece más temprano*, Fototeca de Cuba, Havana). They ran around the Old Square, using it as a race track. This is the poster announcing the performance.

Joel Rojas (Santa Clara, Cuba, 1968)
Lives and works in Charlotte, NC
Education: Higher Institute of Art, Havana, Cuba (Expelled for political reason in 1989)

The Cave of the Hill of Fire (Petroglyphs and Rupestrian drawings), 1991
Ephemeral Drawing Intervention
Photographic documentation
Dimensions variable
Courtesy of the artist

The Cave of the Hill of Fire (Petroglyphs and Rupestrian drawings) is a series of photographs documenting the drawings that the artist produced inside a cave near Güines, 40 km from the City of Havana in 1991. Rojas' drawings established a dialogue between the ancient petroglyphs and rupestrian drawings made by the pre-colonial natives, the Tainos, and the political propaganda of the moment.

Untitled, 1994-2004
Ink on paper
Dimensions variable
Courtesy of the artist

This is a series of drawings that the artist realized while waiting for buyers at the Cathedral Square in Havana, Cuba. After being censored and banned from exhibiting in cultural institutions, Rojas made a living out of painting folkloric images for tourists.

Lázaro Saavedra (Havana, Cuba, 1964)
Lives and works in Havana, Cuba
Education: Higher Institute of Art, Havana, Cuba (1988); San Alejandro Academy of Fine Arts, Havana, Cuba (1983)
Grants: Batiscafo Residency (2006); Mattress Factory (2004); Iranian Alliance Across Borders, Christoph Merian Foundation (2002); Barbican Center (1999); Ludwig Forum for International Art (1996)
Selected Exhibitions: *En una noche de terror cualquiera comete un crimen*, Institute of Cinematographic Art and Industry, Havana, Cuba (2006); *9th Havana Biennial*, National Museum of Fine Arts, Havana, Cuba, (2006); *New Installations*, Artists in Residency: Cuba, Mattress Factory, Pittsburgh, PA (2004); *El único animal que ríe (The only Animal that laughs)*, National Museum of Fine Arts, Havana, Cuba (2003)*; *Dying Free*, Diverse Works Artspace, Houston, TX (1997)*; *Una de cada clase*, Ludwig Foundation of Cuba, Havana, Cuba / Centro de Conservación, Restauración y Museología, Havana, Cuba (1995)
Selected Collections: National Museum of Fine Arts, Havana, Cuba; Ludwig Forum for International Art, Aachen, Germany; Daros-Latinamerica, Zurich, Switzerland; Museum of Fine Arts, Montreal, Canada.

Metamorphosis (Microbrigade), 1992
Acrylic on cardboard
Dimensions variable
Courtesy of the artist

Ojovideo Corporation, 1996-2004
Video animation
Courtesy of the artist

George Sánchez-Calderón (New York, NY, 1967)
Lives and works in Miami, FL
Education: Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, RI (1995); Florida International University, Miami, FL
Grants: Florida Cultural Consortium (2004); Cintas Foundation (2003); Las Fallas, Taller de Manolo Martín (2001)
Selected Exhibitions: *Metro Pictures*, The Moore Space, Museum of Contemporary Art, Miami, FL (2006); *Miami Midtown Midway*, Miami, FL (2003)*; *Monumento*, Pan American Airlines Hangar, Miami, FL (1999)*; *El Museo de los Baiseros*, Franklin Furnace Archive, New York, NY (1997)*
Selected Collections: Miami Art Museum, Miami, FL; Museum of Contemporary Art, North Miami, FL; Franklin Furnace Archive, New York, NY

Awaiting (Esperando), 1995
Installation featuring public intervention, photographs, drawing, video
Dimensions variable

Inspired by the writings of Miguel de Unamuno and Roland Barthes, the artist built a decoy for capturing a vision of The Virgin Mary in Providence, Rhode Island. Apparitions of The Virgin have appeared throughout the entire world for centuries, usually superseding the arrival of a Western Colonial nation. Common attributes amongst many visions of The Virgin include the radiating aura surrounding her and the presence of an adolescent Jesus. For the most part, recent apparitions have been documented in photographs appearing as hazy blurs. Twentieth Century Apparitions of the Virgin Mary include: The Virgin of Conyers, Georgia (1991- unofficial), The Virgin of Medjugorje (1981), The Virgin of Syracuse (1953), The Virgin of Banneux (1933), The Virgin of Beauring (1932), and The Virgin of Fatima (1917).

Monumento, 1999
Video documentary
3 minutes

The *Monumento* exhibit took place in an abandoned airplane hangar in Coconut Grove, Florida that had once served as the terminal of the Pan American Airways, circa 1933. The Pan American Clipper hangar is also where the captured Bay of Pigs veterans were processed upon returning to the United States in 1963. In the five days the exhibit was open to the public over 3,000 individuals attended. On the fifth day *Monumento* was open, it was vandalized and the majority of the artwork destroyed.

Miami Midtown Midway, 2003
Window installations featuring painted canvases of ephemeral public projects
Dimensions variable
Courtesy of the artist

Miami Midtown Midway was an installation/event that coincided with the arrival of *Art Basel Miami Beach 2003*. The *Midway* celebrated the nomadic nature of traveling carnies similar to the manner in which art fairs travel the globe. Historically, carnies offered a place where one could find various forms of entertainment and quick fix potions. On display in the *Miami Midtown Midway* were five actors, seven poets, five classically trained musicians, a high school dance team, an Afro-Cuban band, Reverend Ethan Acres, a Ferris-wheel, fireworks, and Carney banners featuring South Florida's most prominent art collectors.

Leandro Soto (Cienfuegos, Cuba, 1956)
Lives and works in Phoenix, AZ
Grants: Arizona State University West Creative/Research Grant Award (2003); Mount Holyoke College (1999)
Selected Exhibitions: *Kachireme*, Interdisciplinary Art and Performance Art Gallery, Arizona State University West, Phoenix, AZ (2007)*; *Leandro Soto. Ananda Hall*, Global Arts Village, New Delhi, India (2007)*; *What is the Destiny of Cuban Art? Havana Biennial*, National Museum of Fine Arts, Havana, Cuba (2006); *Cuba 1902-2002: The Centenary of the Cuban Republic*, Blanchard Art Gallery, Mount Holyoke College, South Hadley MA; *Firenze Biennale*, Firenze, Italy (2001); *Leandro Soto: A Retrospective*, Museo Provincial de Cienfuegos, Cienfuegos, Cuba (2000)*; *La gente en casa (People at home)*, Havana Biennial, National Museum of Fine Arts, Havana, Cuba (2000)
Selected Collections: Museum of Contemporary Art, North Miami, FL; Arizona State University, Phoenix, AZ; National Museum for the Fine Arts, Havana, Cuba; Museum of Contemporary Art, Michoacan, Mexico; Lowe Art Museum, University of Miami, Miami, FL; Fort Lauderdale Museum of Art, Fort Lauderdale, FL; Je-

rome Lawrence and Robert E. Lee Theater Research Institute at Ohio State University, Columbus, OH

Man and ropes (El hombre y los estrobos), 1979
Performance, photographic documentation, collage
4 pieces: 16.5 x 10.9 inches, 16.5 x 7.5 inches, 16.5 x 11 inches, 16.5 x 7.5 inches
Courtesy of the artist

This performance took place on a beach in Cienfuegos at dusk. The artist produced several arrangements using old ropes and a piece of a sail that he collected from the sea. Soto metaphorically represented the beauty and memory of used objects rendered old by the water.

Mutant at 0 Avenue (Mutante en Avenida 0), 1979
Performance, photographic documentation, collage
2 pieces: 16.5 x 11 inches, 16.5 x 7.5 inches
Courtesy of the artist

Soto picked the street "Avenida 0" in the city of Cienfuegos, Cuba, where he placed empty, smashed tin cans in geometric patterns that matched the gaps on the road. He forced people driving on that road to change their routine paths.

Ancesters (Ancestros), 1979-1981
Performance, photographic documentation, collage
2 pieces: 16.5 x 10.98 inches, 16.5 x 7.5 inches
Courtesy of the artist

At the foot of a ceiba tree, a sacred tree in Yoruba religion and a symbol of the connection between the spiritual and the earthly, Soto crated an installation with guitars, candles and other types of offerings alluding to Afro-Hispanic and indigenous cultures. The process was repeated for several hours on different days at different public places in the city.

Ancesters II (Ancestros II), 1981
Performance documentation, photography
Dancers: Georgina Ramos, Humberto González, Nery Fernández
Music: Arte Vivo (Enrique, Tanya, Leyva and Mario Dali),
Photos credit: Rogelio López Marín (Gory) and Pirole
Dimensions variable
Courtesy of the artist

Ballet dancers and the rock band Arte Vivo used several elements of the original installation with the same concept of syncretism for a performance carried out in the home of the National Ballet of Cuba.

Portrait of the artist (Retrato del artista), 1980
Performance, photographic documentation, collage
25.5 x 19.5 inches
Courtesy of the artist

Volume I (Volumen I), 1981
Drawing and collage on paper, poster
20 x 29 inches
Courtesy of Glaxis Novoa

Soto depicts his performance *Mutant at 0 Avenue* on one of the posters designed by artists participating in the exhibition *Volume I*.

Ezequiel Suárez (Havana, Cuba, 1967)

Lives and works in Havana, Cuba

Education: San Alejandro Academy of Fine Arts, Havana, Cuba (1985)

Founder, curator and co-director, (with Sandra Ceballos) of Espacio Aglutinador, Havana, Cuba (1994-2000)

Selected Exhibitions: *Far from the houses*, Lombard Freid Gallery, New York, NY (2006)*; *Experiments with truth*, Fabric Workshop Museum, Philadelphia, PA (2005); *Vamos fazer barullo agora, porra!* (Carlos Garaicoa), Galería Habana, Havana, Cuba (2005)*; *Fruto de leche mala*, VII Havana Biennial, private house, Havana, Cuba (2000)*; *While Cuba waits*, *Art from the Nineties*, Track 16 Gallery, Los Angeles, CA (1999); *Spanish Painting and New Swiss Art* (with Pedro Álvarez), Espacio Aglutinador, Havana, Cuba (1998)*; *Cada artista que se va es un fragmento que se pierde*, Espacio Aglutinador, Havana, Cuba (1995); *El Frente Bauhaus*, Espacio Aglutinador, Havana, Cuba (1994)*

No to the Bad Holocaust (No al Holocausto malo), 2007

Installation, mixed media

Dimensions variable

Courtesy of the artist

Ezequiel Suárez and Yalí Romagoza (Havana, Cuba)

Lives and works in Havana, Cuba

Education: Art History, University of Havana, Havana, Cuba (2006)

T & T

José Ángel Toirac, Tanya Angulo and Gustavo Perez Monzon

Active: 1988-1990

18 days, 1989

Group Exhibition at the Center of Visual Arts and Design in Havana Cuba with Abdel Hernández, Hubert Moreno, Alejandro López, Danza Abierta group, José Luis Alonso Mateo, Nilo Castillo and others

Photographic documentation, ephemera

Dimensions variable

Courtesy of Glexis Novoa

Jose Angel Toirac states on T & T's collective work: "Our proposal—to put on a personal show by Gustavo- inserted in this context and valued according to the prevailing myth about Gustavo's, 'artistic inactivity' becomes a demystification of his image. But his attitude lacks such transcendentalist pretentiousness. His work has consisted in a characterization of the space of the gallery for various purposes during 18 days, according to the events taking place in that period."

Untitled (Sin título), 1988

Performance documentation, photography, ephemera

Dimensions variable

Courtesy of Glexis Novoa.

As part of the exhibition *18 Days*, this performance by José A. Toirac consisted of a parody of the performance *It Is Not Only What You See*, by Glexis Novoa. Toirac used the same clothes as Novoa, but changed its content. He substituted the grotesque blood gushing out and the cow's entrails spilling out of the stomach with color candies in order to ridicule the intention of the original work.

T10 (Transfunctional Territory) (Havana, Cuba, 1981)

Lives in Havana, Cuba

Education: Currently studying at the Higher Institute of Art, Havana, Cuba; Behavior Art Workshop, conducted by Cuban artist Tania Bruguera, Havana, Cuba (2003-2005); San Alejandro Academy of Fine Arts, Havana, Cuba (2002).

Selected Exhibitions: *Utilitarian Dreams*, Brighton Fringe Basement, Brighton, UK / Headquarters of Vivarta Theatre Studio, Havana, Cuba (2006); *Beta A.E. 1 //P.P. A.E. 2//*, Higher Institute of Art, Havana, Cuba (2006); *STATE*, Learning Site Residence, Group N55, Copenhagen, Denmark (2006); *A is B between Art and Science*, Havana Gallery, Havana, Cuba (2004)

STATE (Update) [ESTADO, (Actualización)], 2006-2007

Computer program: *STATE*

Courtesy of the artist

T10 or "Transfunctional Territory," created a computer virus (*STATE*) based on four characteristics of states: their capacity to export, import, accumulate, and be an agent of change. The software is based on its system of development and on the failure of real states, including the systems of dependency and the subordination they generate. *STATE* evolves and "learns" in order to become more effective. When it enters a computer, it gains access to the basic data and begins to propagate itself throughout the web through a system that mutates after a certain amount of time, making the system impossible to nail down and defeat. This procedure simulates the mechanism used by the state in detecting and overcoming its failures as an entity exercising control and power in a society.

Todos Estrellas (All Stars)

Cuban visual artists play baseball (La plástica cubana se dedica al béisbol: Por el deporte, la cultura física y la recreación), 1989

Music: Zeus and Takson

Author: Hubert Moreno

Photo credit: José A. Figueroa

Performance documentation, photographs, poster

7 pieces: 12 x 15 inches each

Courtesy of Glexis Novoa, Miami, FL and José A. Figueroa, Havana, Cuba

This performance took place in the José Antonio Echeverría Sport Center at the University of Havana. This singular protest repudiated cultural censorship. Over 35 artists and 2 art critics participated, forming two teams, Blue and Red.

Equipo Azul (Blue Team):

Nilo Castillo, Aldito Menéndez, Antonio Eligio Fernández (Tonel), Eduardo Ponjuán, Luis Gómez, Abdel Hernández, Hubert Moreno, Ermy Taño, Carlos Rodríguez Cárdenas, Eric Gómez, Víctor Manuel, Alejandro Aguilera, Tomas Esson, Nicolás Lara, Pedro Álvarez, Alejandro López, Rovaldo Rodríguez, Rubén Mendoza, Ángel Alonso.

Equipo Rojo (Red Team):

Rafael López, Glexis Novoa, Iván de La Nuez, Alejandro Frometa, Lázaro Saavedra, Rene Francisco, Pedro Vizcaíno, José Ángel Toirac, Juan Pablo Ballester, Gerardo Mosquera, Llopiz, Flavio Garcíandia, Silveira, David Palacios, Adriano Buergo, Azcano.

José Ángel Toirac (Guantánamo, Cuba, 1966)

Lives and works in Havana, Cuba

Education: Higher Institute of Art, Havana, Cuba (1990); San Alejandro Academy of Fine Arts, Havana, Cuba (1985)

Grants: Mattress Factory (2004)

Selected Exhibitions: *New Installations*, Artists in Residence: Cuba, Mattress Factory Pittsburgh, PA (2004); *The American Effect*, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY (2003); *Siempre/ Always*, Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Havana, Cuba (2003); *Think Different*, Art in General, New York, NY (2002)*; *El arte contemporáneo de Cuba: Irony and Survival on the Utopian Island*, Arizona State University Art Museum, Tempe, AZ (1998); *Kuba O.K.*, Kunst aus Kuba, Kunsthalle, Dusseldorf, Germany (1990); *Homage to Hans Haacke*, Castle of the Royal Force, Havana, Cuba (1989)

Selected Collections: Museum of Modern Art, New York NY; Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Havana, Cuba; Arizona State University Art Museum, Tempe, AZ; Jack S. Blanton Museum of Art, Austin, TX; Ludwig Forum for Contemporary Art, Aachen, Germany; Centro Atlántico de Arte Moderno, Canary Island, Spain

In the Spirit of Crazy Horse: Homage to Delacroix (En el espíritu de un caballo desbocado: Homenaje a Delacroix), 2006

Video installation

Dimensions variable

Courtesy of the artist

Toirac appropriates and detaches a sequence of Cuban documentary film *Viva la República (Long Live The Republic)*. The monochromatic image of a runaway horse trotting in the country turns, in time, to blue, red and white tones (perhaps because of the colors of the flag?)

César Trasobares (Holguín, Cuba, 1949)

Lives and works in Miami, FL

Education: MFA, Art History, Florida State University, Tallahassee, FL (1974)

Grants: Art Matters (1995); Cintas Foundation (1980); National Endowment for the Arts (1979)

Selected Exhibitions: *Conservatorium*, The Wolfsonian, Florida International University, Miami Beach, FL (2005)*; *It's For The Birds*, Bernice Steinbaum Gallery, Miami, FL (2004)*; *Old Pillows and Recent Money Works*, Green Library, Florida International University, Miami, FL (2002)*; *Cuba Siglo XX: Modernidad y Sincretismo*, Centre D' Arte, Santa Monica, Barcelona / Fundacion La Caixa, Palma de Mallorca, Centro Atlántico de Arte Moderno, Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, Spain (1996); *Cuba-USA: The First Generation*, The University Museum, University of South Florida, Tampa, FL (1992); *Outside Cuba (Fuera de Cuba)*, Zimmerli Art Museum, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, NJ (1987)

Tia Revolucionaria, 1994

Fabric and bullet shells

Dimensions variable

Courtesy of Joan Guaita, Palma de Mallorca, Spain

Tia Farmacia, 1994

Fabric, soap, shampoo, shaving blades, medicine bottles and other toiletries

Dimensions variable

Courtesy of Joan Guaita, Palma de Mallorca, Spain

Tia Tabacalera, 1995

Fabric and tobacco boxes, replicas of photographs, documents

Dimensions variable

Courtesy of the artist

Untitled (Salvador's Vessel), 2007

Printed fabric with paints and inks, steel rods

33 x 80 inches

Courtesy of the artist

Untitled (Joan's Olives), 2006

Printed fabric with paints and inks, steel rods

33 x 80 inches

All works courtesy of the artist

"Collectively, these works extend my work with Miami Quinceañeras and Chaperonas. The works are based on skirts made and worn by women in my family. My mother, aunts and female cousins were gifted seamstresses throughout their lives, sewing gorgeous dresses for themselves and more practical clothes for the family.

These re-creations of actual functional skirts were originally conceived to underline illicit transfers of goods and materials within Cuba at war and later between the island and the United States. As saddles for re-defined Femme Cheval, these garments transform public bodies into private carriers and transmitters of need, survival, hope and dreams.

Tia Revolucionaria (actual 1957) celebrates the valor of my female relatives who carried guns and ammunitions to Rebels fighting with Fidel in the countryside. *Tia Farmacia* (actual 1980s) highlights the spunk and ingenuity of women mariposas taking medicines and toiletries to relatives on the island. *Tia Tabacalera* (actual 1990s) alludes to women smuggling from Cuba cigars, family photographs and documents of properties which exiles hope to use to reclaim their homes, businesses and farms after the revolution." -Cesar Trasobares

Harold Vázquez (Camaguey, Cuba, 1974)

Lives and works in Havana, Cuba

Education: Higher Institute of Art, Havana, Cuba (2002), Professional School of Visual Arts, Camaguey, Cuba (1993)

Grants: Batiscafo Residency (2006); Agencia Española de Cooperación (2005)

Selected Exhibitions: *Havana Science Fiction*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Washington DC / Bronx River Art Center, Bronx, NY (2004-2005); *Fluorescence*, School of Arts and Letters, University of Havana, Havana, Cuba (2005); *New Crop Havana, Absolut L.A. International Biennial*, ACE Gallery, Los Angeles, CA (2003); *Endless Moment*, Ludwig Foundation of Cuba, Havana, Cuba (2002)*; *Havana-ISA-Club*, Higher Institute of Art, Havana, Cuba (2000)

MC (Moments counter): Dead by Gun, After Félix (Contador de momentos: Muertos por armas, después de Félix), 2006-2007

Counter: 47 x 12 x 8 inches

LED signal display. 60 x 6 x 4 inches

Overall dimensions variable

Courtesy of the artist

Moment Meter (Contador de Momentos) is a device that can transfer statistics into real time. The piece is based on the creation of an expectation about the arrival of a specific event. Vázquez develops a research project about a transcendent phenomenon in the place and at the time the piece is being shown. Then he publishes the research along with its "translation" into a temporal scale, using a digital meter that counts backwards. The effect is the simulacrum of a real event. On this occasion, the artist highlights weapon-related violence in the United States. The reference

to the work *Untitled (Death by Gun)* by Félix González Torres provokes a meditation on the themes of transcendence and the anonymity of a phenomenon such as violent death, through the process of documentation and subsequent serialization. *Moment Meter* attempts to revive the social dimension of the phenomenon, which is diluted when it is rendered into figures.

Liudmila Velasco (Moscow, Russia, 1969)

Nelson Ramirez de Arellano (Berlin, Germany, 1969)

Lives and works in Zurich, Switzerland and Havana, Cuba

Education: San Alejandro Academy of Art, Havana, Cuba (1994)

Grants: Deutscher Akademischer Austausch Dienst (2007); Cuban Artist Fund, Vermont Studios (2005)

Selected Exhibitions: *Mare Nostrum*, Galería Servando Cabrera, Havana, Cuba (2007)*; *Reflexiones íntimas*, Galería Clairefontaine, Luxemburg / ParisPhoto, Paris, France (2006)*; *Havana Biennial*, Havana, Cuba (2000, 2003, 2006); *Absolut Revolution*, Fototeca of Cuba, Havana, Cuba (2002)*;

Selected Collections: Museum of Modern Art, Luxemburg; Lehigh University, Lehigh, Bethlehem, PA

Those who are no longer here (Los que ya no están), 2004-2006

Lambda prints

16 pieces, 11 x 8 inches each

Courtesy of the artist

Those Who Are No Longer Here is an ongoing project. It is a photographic record of imperceptible changes in the city of Havana and its architecture. These changes refer to the absence of the artist's friends, who have migrated from Cuba

José Ángel Vincench (Holguín, Cuba, 1973)

Lives and works in Havana, Cuba

Education: Higher Institute of Art, Havana, Cuba (1997); Professional School of Visual Arts, Holguín, Cuba (1992)

Grants: Cuban Artists Fund, New York, NY (2004); APT Studios (1999); Fordsburg Artists' Studios (1999)

Selected Exhibitions: *Behind the abstract*, Axis Contemporary Art, Calgary, Canada (2007)*; *8th Havana Biennial*, Havana, Cuba (2003); *Desde el interior de la tierra*, Havana Gallery, Zurich, Switzerland / Centro Cultural de España, Havana, Cuba (2000); *Trabajando Pa'l Ingle*, Concourse Gallery, Barbican Center, London, UK (1999); *While Cuba Waits: Art in the Nineties*, Track 16, Santa Mónica, CA (1999); *El Oficio del Arte*, Centre for the Development of the Visual Arts, Havana, Cuba (1995)

Collections: National Museum of Fine Arts, Havana, Cuba

Stretch your hand as long as you can (Estira la mano hasta donde puedas), 1999

Installation, steel, aluminum

Dimensions variable

Courtesy of the artist

Zoom in or Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, 2005

Collages on photographs

9 pieces: 20 x 24 inches each

Courtesy of the artist

Ramón Williams (Havana, Cuba 1969)

Lives and works in Miami, Florida

Education: Higher Institute for Pedagogic Studies, Havana, Cuba

The Woods (Las tablas), 2000-2005

Textile, mixed media on wood from a fence

70 x 55 x 4 inches

Untitled (Sin título), 2000

Mixed media on plywood

48 x 16 x 4 inches

Heart Art Attack, 2002

Photography

12 x 11 inches

Portrait with doves (Retrato con palomas), 2002

Photography

12 x 11 inches

All works courtesy of the artist

ABOUT EXIT ART

Exit Art is an independent vision of contemporary culture. We are prepared to react immediately to important issues that affect our lives. We do experimental, historical and unique presentations of aesthetic, social, political and environmental issues. We absorb cultural differences that become prototype exhibitions. We are a center for multiple disciplines. Exit Art is a 25 year old cultural center in New York City founded by Directors Jeanette Ingberman and Papo Colo. It has grown from a pioneering alternative art space into a model artistic center for the 21st century committed to supporting artists whose quality of work reflects the transformations of our culture. Exit Art is internationally recognized for its unmatched spirit of inventiveness and consistent ability to anticipate the newest trends in the culture. With a substantial reputation for curatorial innovation and depth of programming in diverse media, Exit Art is always on the verge of change.

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EXIT ART

New York, 2008





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