



Tania Bruguera

b. Havana, Cuba, 1968

Tania Bruguera's work should be understood as an open-ended activity; a platform from which to explore a wide range of possibilities, rather than an attempt to build an apparently coherent body of work. She sets out to examine possible links between apparently unrelated problems: the feminine condition, emigration, a sense of physical and spiritual displacement and problems of communication compounded by social conditioning and misinformation.

This activity is characterised by a fascination for all that is forced out of the mainstream and into the margins, and is echoed in the artistic methods she employs: the conceptual; worked forged through social participation; performance and the use of her own body. In returning to the 'idea as art', and to physical and ephemeral 'actions', she reclaims an aesthetic now almost totally neglected in Cuba - where the emphasis is very much on the making of objects destined for a hypothetical market.

Her fascination with the marginal can also be seen in the subject matter of her work. She wishes to illuminate - without resorting to sarcasm or aggression - the particular circumstances of women artists. This emerges in her exploration of the 'feminine' in her early homage to Marilyn Monroe, and in her re-creation of works by the Cuban-American artist Ana Mendieta. Tania was also the organizer of an exhibition of work by women artists at the Fifth Havana Bienal (1994).

Any detailed study of the character and work of Ana Mendieta, must make reference to emigration and exile and to the pain of being torn between an attachment to one's roots, and a need to adapt and survive in new surroundings. Where possible, Tania Bruguera writes these experiences and feelings into her own biography, carelessly packing up her past and - carrying with her the packages that are a feature of her work - transforming herself into a traveller.

For a recent work she produced an ambiguous newspaper, halfway between an alternative cultural review and an anti-establishment pamphlet. *Memorias de la Postguerra* (Postwar Memories) is a clear reminder that 'information is power'. It tries to facilitate the unofficial circulation of ideas, addressing matters rarely debated in public from an alternative viewpoint to that of the powerful official press. As an artwork it enters the realms of the 'hyper-real' - a cracked and imperfect version of the smooth, bland mirror held up by the press. In its texts, photos and sketches it offers a collision of disparate and contradictory voices which refuse to be stifled by the immutable black and white of ink and paper. As a newspaper it is a determinedly utopian project, conceived at the margins but designed to infiltrate the centre - an action or gesture that is eloquent in its ultimate frustration.