

1990'S ART FROM CUBA

A National Residency and Exhibition Program



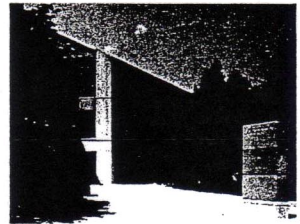
The School of The Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois USA

It is the arrival at a new and unfamiliar territory that either makes one withdraw in terror or embrace the newness with relentless bravery and agility. I would imagine that Tania Bruguera adapted the feelings of unfamiliarity experienced during her brief residency at the school into a creative experiment. It was one that sought to reconcile the allure of Western capitalist illusion with blatant realism, an adaptation that has earned her generation of artists, "The Weeds," their name.

As if walking down "the yellow brick road," Bruguera, like Dorothy in the classic American film *The Wizard of Oz*, systematically confronted the illusion of American Capitalism. Ready-made and fast food evoked larger questions regarding American society, such as migration/movement, cultural erasure, and breaches of the American dream. Her captivation by homelessness demarked a new avenue for Bruguera's artistic exploration. As in previous work such as *Daedalus, the Empire*, Bruguera recognized parallels between the city's transient community and immigration from her island home. Homelessness for Bruguera became an insightful metaphor for the Cuban experience, the collective ethos of both Cubans living on the island and in America.

She made many visits to the world of lower Wacker Drive in Chicago, which proved a formidable laboratory. It is from this world that Bruguera formulated her performance *Art in America (The Dream)*, a work in progress. From many interactions and dialogues with both transients and immigrants, she composed a chaotic collage of movement and interactions assembled through questions of personal and political exile as well as the arduous journey "home." Her performance took us to the intersection of loss, nostalgia and rootedness, and journeyed through the forest of bureaucratic red tape necessary to enter the Emerald City and called America.

The work itself was an interactive journey for Bruguera that gathered a local Cuban community, including Ricardo Fernandez, Nereida Garcia-Ferraz, Raquel Mendieta, Achy Obejas, Maria Torres, and Teresa Wiltz. Like a modern-day Dorothy, Bruguera, with sheer vision and determination, sought to define the term home. Her work embraces the universality of belonging and a need for placement. It is a pertinent statement in the wake of increased global migration at the advent of the twenty-first century.



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