

Tania Bruguera

NEUBERGER MUSEUM OF ART AT PURCHASE COLLEGE STATE
UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK
735 Anderson Hill Road
January 28–April 11



Tania Bruguera, *Untitled (Havana, 2000)*,
2000, Performance view.

Tania Bruguera is a name familiar to anyone tuned in to the international biennial circuit. Less known are her actual installations, which are conceived in and for specific environments and are, in many cases, transient. As the recipient of the first Neuberger Exhibition Prize, Bruguera is now the focus of a painstakingly installed solo show that assembles more than a decade of her work for the first time.

“On the Political Imaginary,” however, is no mere rehearsal, and the avowedly committed character of the projects therein is augmented, but not lost, in translation. While performances that rely heavily on foreign constituencies, such as *Displacement*, 1998–99, or *Untitled (Moscow)/Trust Workshop*, 2007, do not benefit from the participation of the Cubans or Russians around whom they were conceived, they gain new life here when placed in dialogue with other works and with the museum itself—a juxtaposition with a Kongo figure from the Brooklyn Museum, and a wall cut that physically links the Moscow piece to another gallery.

The vitality of these works also owes much to the presence of live performers who inhabit the installations, their presence at once subtle yet critical to the success of an intentionally dialogic process of display and spectatorship. There is certainly a political leitmotif running through the installations, but the works never feel didactic, inviting their participants to make choices and draw their own conclusions, to act out the democratic impulses that course through the work rather than ingesting ideas wholesale. While it is easy of late to be cynical about the social potential of contemporary art (relationality, performance, “politics”), Bruguera’s balance of erudition and viscerality might make a believer out of you.

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