

Letter to the Deputy Ministry of Culture: "I return the Distinction for National Culture and renounce my membership in UNEAC"



Camrade Fernando Rojas
Deputy Ministry of Culture
Republic of Cuba

Upon my return from Documenta11, the Ministry of Culture awarded me, on November 27, 2002, and along with other young artists, the Distinction for National Culture. For years I did not give importance to this event because it did not change anything in my life or in my thinking. In fact I did not remember whether I'd kept it or whether I'd lost it. After the recent events, this distinction had a different meaning for me.

Today I return this Distinction to the Ministry of Culture, I'm putting it back in the hands of Deputy Minister with whom I have had already ideological discussions about censorship. Today I also renounce my membership in the National Union of Writers and Artists of Cuba (UNEAC). I cannot uphold a distinction or be part of an institution that proposes to speak for all of us, but where only one; the chairmanship of the Organization signs on our behalf,. Cultural Institutions that instead of opening up dialogue and a space for aesthetic analysis, criminalize, judge, reduce the response to an artwork by generating fear of the work while disengaging themselves from it.

I have heard many times in Cuba "this is not the appropriate time to voice a critique" or to use a metaphor or to make a play. Many times I autocensored myself, upon hearing those words that magically seem to find blame in doubt or question an opinion. Today I know that the right time for an artist is ALWAYS, but especially when the ways to assess the social and the human are put under suspension. The right time cannot be a government directive because that would be propaganda, not art. The artist would be at the service of a government and not the society at large. Opinions and art cannot exist only when it is permitted by the institutions. I think it was the right time to do an artwork, because all the decisions about what Cuba is going to be, have still to be made, they are not implemented yet. There is still hope and many people believe that there are undefined spaces of which all Cubans could be a part.

Changes in Cuba cannot be real if the decision comes from the top, it is informed and has to be accepted as such. Changes in Cuba cannot be real if a different opinion is only given when the government invites it. Changes in Cuba cannot be real if Cubans are afraid to use certain words such as Human Rights. The changes in Cuba cannot be real if a Cuban is afraid that his opinion will leave him/her unemployed. Changes in Cuba can not be real if what interests the government about Cubans is their capital and not their ideas.

How sad is a government that sees one minute to speak up freely given to the average Cuban folk without its control as a State threat! How sad a government that imprisons the audience assisting an art performance.

Today I do not renounce my past, but rather place my bet on our future, because Cuba can not open itself to the world, without opening to Cubans themselves.

Yours sincerely,

Tania Bruguera.

Havana, January 5th, 2015

(Audio Transcription) - soundcloud.com/yotambienexijo