

The other Boycott (Part 1)



I've received the same question from various artists and friends over the last few days. What can we do for you now that the Havana Biennial is near? Boycott or no Boycott? It's what's on everyone's mind.

The institution is very concerned with the idea of the boycott and are preparing themselves from now with an answer that offers no confusion: Cultural guides who are fronting groups of museum patrons that are arriving make it clear when these ask to include me on the visits that they are making to artist studios that Tania Bruguera is not an artist, *she is now a protester*. We'd have to give these guides an intensive course about art and politics and activism. Its important for those who have lived experiences like these to make them public so that it doesn't appear to be the hallucination of just one person.

That a tour guide can define whether or not I'm an artist is the most marvelous real or the most honest thing (they have taken off their masks, we always knew they worked for the government even though they ask for a percentage of sales or a fixed rate to artists when they bring groups to their studios). These cutting affirmations by "cultural" guides makes me think that maybe they won't give me my passport before the Biennial as many predicted and that they will simply "erase me from the map," they're going to hit me hard in the only place it hurts; being an artist.

The problem is that being an artist is not defined by a visit of people with money that want to buy works (anyway I have nothing to sell), nor is it the prerogative of State Security, nor even of the Ministry of Culture. What makes you an artist is how your work touches the people who come into contact with it, and since the 30th of December I feel like more of an artist than ever before. What makes you an artist is a very strong conviction you have, that doesn't change suddenly if nobody knows you exist. Those who waste their time in offices thinking of how to eliminate me from public life have just understood that what I do is because of conviction and not ego.

Tania Bruguera
Havana, Cuba
March 17, 2015