

Flash Art

Art in Cuba

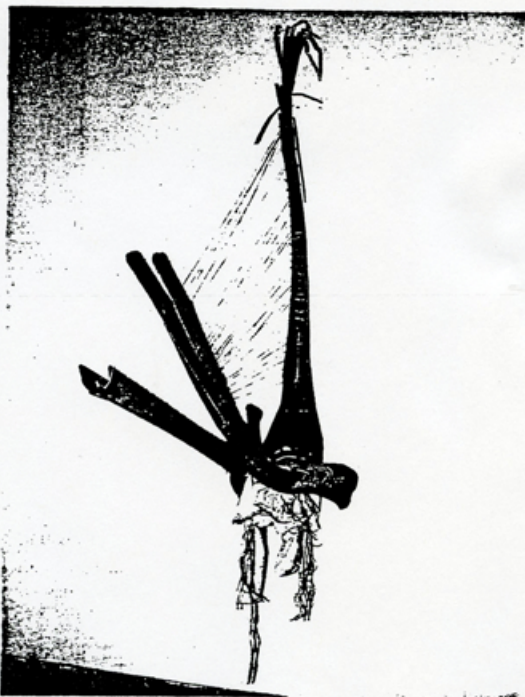
THE MASK: UTOPIA AND IDEOLOGY

Eugenio Valdés Figueroa

"Aperto" is a Flash Art "virtual" exhibition, curated to highlight the art currently being shown in a particular city or region. It will soon be available for viewing on Flash Art's upcoming new Web site.

This is what distinguishes Gomez's work from other Cuban artists such as Alexis Leyva (Kcho) or Tania Bruguera, who concern themselves with the myth of mythological objects. For Kcho and Bruguera, the mythology of the object — be it a raft or an artifact conceived as a means of flight — is rooted in the strategem of escape. It has always been man's dream to live on through the objects he makes and to fabricate his own transcendence in a bid to resolve his own finiteness in the fatal cycle of birth and death. Many of Kcho and Bruguera's objects cast doubts on the idea of perpetuity. Kcho's boats made from dead, recycled materials are, in appearance, ruinous and brittle, and useless for the purpose of sailing. The same applies to the contraptions concocted by Bruguera paradoxically entitled *Dedalo* or *Imperio de Salvación* (*Empire of Salvation*). All of these artifacts have been created with the individual's escape from his own labyrinth in mind: the same objects, however, constitute a trap. They have all been exhibited indiscriminately by the artists as autonomous pieces or as part of performances aimed at highlighting their messages. According to Bruguera: "The object is animated only when the individual wearing it activates the necessary mechanisms. In this sense, it ends up as part of the body. It's anthropological character is reinforced by the organic way in which it is

inactive, terminal object as a dead, aesthetic, museum-bound thing... a sign. Elsewhere, in *Ilusion* (*Illusion*), the pedals can only be turned with arms raised and fists clenched in an obvious gesture of protest. And so it goes on... "In this sense, the subject endows the object with meaning while his gestures add to the symbolic structure of the work. The material and the symbol — the very supports of transcendentalist vanguard discourse — are plunged into crisis by these artists' work by means of a conflict between an awareness of mortality and an aspiration to eternity.



Tania Bruguera, *Ilusion* (*Illusion*), 1994-95.