

**Delayed Patriotism**  
**Tania Bruguera**  
**The Bronx Museum of the Arts**

Guests entering the sun-filled second-floor space of the Bronx Museum late one Sunday morning were faced with the disorienting atmosphere of a casual brunch in which small groups of people standing in circles, chatting and nibbling food, while a few others, sitting in chairs and looking upward, tried to engage in conversation as they balanced plates on their laps. Stranger still was the line that formed in front of a set of double doors next to the bathroom. Every five minutes, a Museum staff member would open the doors to allow the next person in line to go in. What was going on inside that room was anyone's guess until the very first visitors began to emerge and share their mementos with those still waiting: small framed photographs of themselves holding an African eagle on their forearm, under the watchful gaze of one of several dictators whose portraits decorated the wall behind them.

A key element in Tania Bruguera's performance was hinted at by the use of the Duchampian concept of "delay" in its title, for here "action" was indeed deferred, halted, anticipated, as people literally waited in line for something they didn't exactly know anything about. But in contrast to Duchamp, Bruguera, who is Cuban-born and teaches at the University of Chicago, is keenly interested in power relations and *Delayed Patriotism* was conceived as the first in a series of events to announce the creation of the Party of Migrant People, a cross-borders institution defined on the premise that displacement and migration have become a common cultural mode, as large parts of many continents' populations are forced into mass exodus amidst political strife. The memento photographs, which guests were allowed to take home, eerily reminded that these new trends in migration and displacement trace a depressing map of dictatorships across the world, many made legitimate with financial support from the United States. The pet eagle that visitors momentarily adopted with youthful enthusiasm stood as a double token connecting the innocent bystander onto a convoluted historical background.

In the broader scope of Bruguera's work, *Delayed Patriotism* represents a departure of sorts as the concept of performance has now been stretched to encompass a situation in which the focus is no longer the artist's own actions. Bruguera seems no longer interested in representing political situations, but rather in setting up the conditions for the examination of political structure.

Sergio Bessa