

TANIA BRUGUERA

Freedom is a central concept in the work of Cuban artist Tania Bruguera, who uses her body to explore both political and physical boundaries. Inspired by artists such as Ana Mendieta and Marina Abramovic, she has acted in her own videos, smashing her face, yanking her hair, and pulling her lips apart to make weird, contorted expressions—as if trying to escape her own physicality. One Bruguera installation occurred outdoors, underground, where visitors were invited to voluntarily undergo torture, being tied to one another and having their mouths stuffed with foreign objects. For another project, Bruguera made a Cuban flag out of human hair, and sat in front of it with a slaughtered lamb for a number of hours. Bringing to mind Carolee Schneeman's iconic 1964 performance *Meat Joy*, for which a number of naked men and women rolled around with raw meat in a Dionysiac frenzy, Bruguera has brought unsettling attention to the carnal aspect of her own physicality. For instance, in her performance *El peso de la culpa* (*The Burden of Guilt*), Bruguera posed nude with an animal carcass strapped to her body (while seeming to eat raw meat). For *Cuerpo del silencio* (*Body of Silence*), she sat nude on heaps of meat while licking one slab of the same (and holding a ball point pen in one hand, apparently commenting on the violence of acculturation). Imagery with fertile, female connotations—the ocean, torrential rain, ripe tropical fruit—also often turns up in the artist's work. Given Bruguera's nationality and gender, oppression and entrapment are themes with obvious political significance. But her work resonates more profoundly, speaking also to the fundamental human desire to obtain liberty; her body becomes a site where the struggle occurs.

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