
Roberto Chile: Fidel is a Feeling

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Roberto Chile is an artist who grows from his modesty; he has many virtues, the first one is to see where others seem to be blind and shed light from his lens over people's soul, of his homeland, of the time. Roberto Chile is a revolutionary, Martí follower, pro-Castro... hence the portraits he now exhibits at José Martí Memorial are much more than a birthday party, they are an act of faith.

He spoke in an exclusive interview with Cubasi about his recently inaugurated exhibition ***Fidel is Fidel***.

I am well aware of the beloved admiration you feel for that huge man, then I would like you to explain the idea of the title: who is Fidel for Roberto Chile

Fidel is a feeling to me.

Fidel could be an endless topic, especially for someone who has spent life leaving evidence of his figure through a camera, what messages on that man-topic you chose to share this time?

"The theme of the exhibition is inspired on a phrase of the German playwright Bertolt Brecht: There are men who struggle for a day, and they are good. There are others who struggle for a year, and they are better. There are some who struggle many years, and they are better still. But there are those who struggle all their lives, and these are the indispensable ones. That is what I have wanted to express with images, not with words: that Fidel is indispensable, a man who has struggled a lifetime and has not given up against destiny."

Chile expo

Did you discover something new during the preparation of the exhibition on Fidel that spectators will also be able to find in the interaction with the pieces?

"Fidel always surprises us. Looking at photographs and recordings of the past, we find several moments, many of them still unpublished. Fidel is living history. You may share his ideas or not, be his follower or his opponent, to be in favor or against him, but you cannot be indifferent before his greatness. Many countries around the world would like to have a leader like him. If the Cuban people withstood, if the Cuban Revolution has stood firm, it's because we had and we have Fidel. You can see that in the images we show today, the devotion of a people for its leader, the sympathy he receive everywhere he went, the trail of admiration after him. It's an endless flow of memories impossible to fit in an art gallery or screen, only in the heart of those who we have lived him... "

Most of the pictures are of moments after the Proclaim, why?

"For over 25 years I had the task of registering the moving image of Fidel. Recently I put to rest the shooting camera and I chose fixed image to stop in time the epic symbol of a iconic man of those who struggle a lifetime: Fidel's star, Towards the Future, Commander in Chief, Guerilla Fighter of Time, By the Light of Che and Eternal Baraguá, among others, are some of the pictures of the exhibition **FIDEL is FIDEL**. Although there are some pictures from 2005 and 2006, most are from 2010, like you said, after the Proclaim. "

I only saw two printed pictures in full colors...

"For me and for many others, the photographs of the Revolution are black and white. Perhaps that is because to the admiration we feel for the photographers of the epic, our forerunners: Alberto Korda, Raúl Corrales, Ernesto Fernández, Osvaldo and Roberto Salas, Liborio Noval, and José Alberto Figueroa, among others, and somehow, this exhibition, besides being a homage to Fidel, it's a token of gratitude and recognition to the greatest of Cuban photography".

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Tell me about the selection of audiovisuals among the so many you have made during so many years working with Fidel.

"The audiovisual material remembers moments of Fidel's revolutionary work. They are pieces of his tireless leadership at the head of the Cuban Revolution. Many of those moments are filmed just as we lived them, others with a more poetic approach. Everything distanced from schematism. They are pure history. Thrilling moments that moved our human and patriotic feelings that left a deep impression in each one of us. There was collective shuddering when these brief instants of history were shown; it was a rendezvous with Fidel and history, a booster of hope."

The brass sculpture also comes from some of the pictures? How did that idea stroke and how about the making process?

"The brass sculpture is inspired by one of the most emblematic images of the exhibition: Fidel's Star. The only time he wore an olive green cap with a star on the forehead. That was September 28, 2010 during the 50th anniversary of the CDR organization outside the Presidential Palace. The sculpture reproduces that cap with its star, life size. It was an idea that woke me up at dawn and which I could create in brass thanks to sculptor Daniel Torres who was responsible for making it. We were really obsessive about the finishing of this work that rests on a base that simulates the stone, carried out by sculptor Andrés González."

Why did you invite Ernesto Rancaño to work in two of the pictures? Could this experience be multiplied in the future with other artists for a new exhibition?

"In order to add the exhibition a pinch of lyricism and have the imagination of spectators fly away. I am already thinking of a 10-image exhibition of my own intervened by Cuban artists. We have already chosen three and also three artists who will be responsible for the recreation of these images. That is scheduled for 2016. Or maybe sooner. We'll see. Inspiration and love cannot be controlled."

Tell me about the parallel exhibition at the "Art Stalher" gallery of Berlin.

"Though the exhibition was thought for Cubans, it's also presented, following the proposal of promoter Ada María de Boer, at the "Art Stalker" gallery of Berlin, with the support of curator Jennifer SpruB and Héctor Corcho, cultural attaché of our embassy in Germany as well as the collaboration of German and Cuban friends, companies, institutions, and organizations in solidarity with Cuba.

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"For Cubans this exhibition means a rendezvous with their leader, for Germans, a chance to deepen in the life and personality of a worldwide statesman".

What will we see of Roberto Chile in the future? Plans, projects, maybe to continue with the theme of Afro descendents ... can you tell us?

"For over a year I've been working hard in a new photographic project, "Roots", with the intention of penetrating the spirituality of our African inheritance and investigate in the magic mystic universe of religions with African origin in Cuba.

"A new visual adventure to which I'm dedicating all my efforts. That is in photography. In the audiovisual material, I have just finished the shooting of three documentary films with the North American directors Eugene Corr (From Ghost Town to Havana) and Ken Schneider (Havana Curveball) and with the Scottish filmmaker Eirene Houston (The Cuban Way). During what could be my vacations, I will make a featured film with Maxime Marduokhaev, Russian-French documentary filmmaker, with whom I'll share the direction and photography, of what will be a look into Cuba's present and future.

"These are some of my battles, my realities, and my dreams. I can't live without working."
