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The Biennial that Comes

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On April 12<sup>th</sup> begins the greatest visual arts appointment in Cuba, the great platform for artists and projects from several countries, the chance that thousands of Cubans and visitors review the different creative tendencies: until May 12<sup>th</sup> will take place the XIII Biennial of Havana.

There are several debates at hand (and some are very heated up) on the Biennial of Havana: the suitability of its name (keeping in mind that is no longer occurring every two years); its structure and main idea (to what extent does the dispersion of centers affect the conceptual coherence of the appointment?); its relationship with the market (as in Cuba there isn't a large art fair, many see the Biennial as an opportunity to make business)...

In what almost everybody seems to agree is in the need that the Biennial must be reinvented. Obviously, the circumstances of the key moment aren't by far the ones now. How to organize such demanding meeting that dialogue with the present without betraying the lifelong essences? That is the million dollar question... and there are a lot of people trying to answer it.

But among discussions, the thirteenth edition of the greatest summoning of the visual arts in Cuba - and probably of the Caribbean - is just around the corner. And the challenge declared of organizers is to make the best Biennial possible in a particularly complicated context, of strong tensions in the national and international panorama.

It's clear that the event cannot be settled with just being a showcase: it has to assume an active role before society that welcomes it and promotes it. Art, as it's known, it can and should move ideas that many times go beyond its own boundaries.

#### THE YOUTH AT THE CENTER

It's not casual that for this Biennial young artists have a clear protagonism: many of the collective projects bring together creators under 35 years old that will open the thematic, stylistic and conceptual spectrum in consonance

with the challenges of the time.

It may seem risky to bet for works that have not probably reached their full definition yet; but the budgets of the Biennial have always guaranteed spaces for experimentation and laboratory. Anyway, the encounter also promotes an open debate on the strength and the opportunity of the event.

The aim is that the theoretical complement (sessions with the presence of outstanding art critics, researchers, and historians, Cubans and foreigners) don't gloat in the ethereal and general visions, but rather touch very specific topics and that offer alternative or illuminate possible roads for the analysis of the creative processes and its results.

This edition's slogan is, "**The construction of the possible**", has raised mistrust in some creators (art should actually bet precisely to build the impossible, they say); but organizers want to highlight in the very act of "building"; that is, art as an integrating project, but never definitive that comes true and that impacts on the daily lives of citizens.

And that is one of the features of the Biennial of Havana: it goes beyond the conventional spaces for the exhibition (museums and galleries) and tries to win footholds on the society.

### ART FOR THOSE ART FOLLOWERS

No wonder the most popular and commented proposals from previous events were those put on People's path (mainly people who doesn't usually attend exhibitions) expressions of contemporary art.

This year will return to the famous Malecon Avenue the project "Behind the Wall" that will comprise about 6 kilometers with the proposals of Cuban and foreigners artists. The creations, most of them will stimulate the interaction with passersby.

The Biennial is included in the program for the celebrations of the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Havana's foundation and as a special homage to the city will propose in Línea Street a "Cultural Corridor" that will outline the relative reformation of public spaces - sidewalks, streets, signs, groves and theaters, bookstores, cafes and restaurants - to establish a sort of open-sky gallery.

### **The characteristics of that initiative will soon be disclosed.**

The vanguard of creation in the country will have presence in the main headquarters of the Biennial. The curatorial list, for example, includes nine National Awards for Plastic Arts in Cuba: Manuel Mendive, Roberto Fabelo, René Francisco Rodríguez, José Manuel Fors, José Villa Soberón, Pedro de Oraá, Pedro Pablo Oliva, Eduardo Ponjuán and José A. Toirac...

But the list of participant artists includes 300 artists, individual and collective projects from 52 countries.

Those who doubt the level of summoning of the Biennial should keep in mind these data.

The main headquarters - if we mean cultural centers -, will be the Center of Contemporary Art Wifredo Lam, the National Museum of Fine Arts, the Great Theater of Havana Alicia Alonso, the University of Arts (ISA), the Chullima Workshop, the Gallery Factoria Havana, the Center for Development of Visual Arts...

There will be side exhibitions at The National Academy of Fine Arts San Alejandro, Casa de las Americas, the Experimental Graphic and Serigraph Printing Workshops René Portocarrero... and also, the exhibition circuit will be enlarged with interventions at squares and streets, and at the workshops of several artists.

Plenty of art all over the city. And beyond, because for the first time events within the Biennial will arrive to four domestic provinces: Matanzas, Pinar del Rio, Cienfuegos, and Camagüey.

The organizers of the event insist that the XIII Biennial will showcase the thoughts and evolution of contemporary artistry, presented from the interaction among creators, curators, experts and institutions. It's about, somehow, promoting the sustainable development of the entire society, without neglecting the purposeful character of the art work...

Anyways, the question is to convince people about the need of art that should never be assumed as a luxury or a whim.

Man doesn't live by bread alone.

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