

CRITICAL ZONE: End of Biennial

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Together with the month of April ended the third and last experience of the XIV Biennial of Havana and it's time to reflect on its impact on the panorama of the arts and on the general public.

The first thing to recognize is the very realization of a demanding, complex, multiple appointment... in a particularly difficult time for the nation and the world. The Biennial is a steady commitment by an institutional framework and, above all, by artists, for the socialization of an art committed to its circumstances, an art that is much more than mere playful recreation, that is more than an escape from a context, or an ideal construction, a utopian imitation.

Some of the proposals for this Biennale reaffirmed art's capacity for dialogue, a legitimate way to position and debate pressing issues of the moment, covering a very broad thematic and conceptual spectrum.

Art is not only there to make life more beautiful (although it's there for that too); Furthermore, it can be a catalyst, a spark of controversy, a witness to processes... and that doesn't mean that it loses its essential beliefs, that doesn't mean that it has to be instrumentalized based on certain demands, or that it can or should replace other instances and social and political mechanisms. Much of that art was available to the public at this Biennale.

However, it did not always have the effective complement of critics, at least in the general media. There was a lack of socialization, coordinates, analysis that would consolidate hierarchies. That, of course, is not the responsibility of artists, but of the critics themselves and

the decision makers in the media.

It would have been necessary to talk more about specific proposals and about the conceptual articulation of the great curatorship of the Biennial. Our art critic delights in academic and specialized spaces... and neglects the larger public. There were theoretical spaces in this Biennial, but their scope was relatively narrow, even though they were promoted on social networks.

Perhaps it influenced the greater extension of the appointment, but the truth is that good calls were diluted in the general programming of the arts of this city. The exhibition **Back to the future**, for example, could have received many more spectators. And it also happened that many of the works located in public spaces in Havana and other cities did not motivate the public. It was a Biennial without great popular events. And a work, outside the conventional exhibition spaces, needs to establish immediate communication with people, either because of its visual appeal or because of the strength and transparency of its concept.

The project **Behind the Wall**, for example, did not meet the expectations of the public. And in other places many people walked by without even noticing that there was art in their path.

However, there was a Biennial. And the very realization was a point in favor in this symbolic struggle in which we are into. Calls for a boycott largely failed. Not all guests came, but almost all did. And artists of worth, Cubans and other countries, attended a call that was not the propaganda apparatus that their detractors warned. We must defend the spaces of art, its autonomy, its incisive spirit. In this sense, the Biennale continues to be a privileged platform. It's necessary to take advantage of it further and better.

**Translated by Amilkal Labañino / CubaSí Translation Staff**

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