

Rolando Pérez Betancourt: the purpose of opinion

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The Cuban culture and culture in Cuba have just lost one of the sharpest, most committed and informed chroniclers. Rolando Pérez Betancourt, who passed away last Saturday in Havana, was one of the most respected journalist and Cuban critic.

His daily work evolved into teaching, and referent to professionals of communication and art. His opinion was taken into account, thanks to his vast talent and studies, and he created one of the most refined and important styles within the Cuban press.

But consistency and intensity never turned into overwhelming boredom and density. He wrote for everyone, taking advantage of an extraordinary sense of synthesis, full mastery of language and remarkable expressive ability.

Rolando Pérez Betancourt was capable of explaining, with great transparency and simpleness, huge challenges and problems of art, culture, and society.

And his critical vocation, accepted without half measures, was always carried out according to an unalterable professional ethic.

In the written pages of the Granma newspaper, Pérez Betancourt published exemplary comments on cinema and other arts. He defended the idea that the critic should not aspire to a total and definitive analysis of the work...but he or she should choose edges and developed them with wisdom and sufficiency of arguments.

"Criticism is not a divine, final word... criticism is one among many proposals, a guide that is not intended to be strict. But if solid enough, it can very well illuminate a dark path," he said in one of his conferences at the José Martí Institute of Journalism.

And he implemented that creed. He did not stay away from public debates. And he never stained his work with petty interests.

He defended the need for critical comment, without imposition, in the most popular media. And in his TV program **La Séptima Puerta**, he pronounced himself with authority due to the power of his analysis, which showed viewers a quality cinema, not always attended by the logic of market.

He was also a novelist and host of several gatherings, cultural promoter... Cuba honored him with important awards: the José Antonio Fernández de Castro National Prize for Cultural Journalism in its first delivery (1999) and the José Martí National Prize for Journalism (2007), among others.

Rolando Pérez Betancourt did not plow in the sea: thousands of Cubans tag him as an educator. He was definitely a teacher. A rooted man of culture.

Translated by Sergio A. Paneque Díaz / CubaSí Translation Staff
