

TANIA BRUGUERA AND *#YOTAMBIENEXIJO*:  
PERFORMANCE, PARTICIPATION, AND POLITICS

by  
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## Introduction

*#YoTambienExijo* began in the last days of December 2014 with the bureaucratic process that ultimately denied Tania Bruguera a permit to gather publicly in Havana. Bruguera was attempting to stage a performance of *Tatlin's Whisper #6* (originally performed in 2009) in La Plaza de Revolución on December 30, 2014, but she was arrested before the performance could take place. In April of 2015, numerous arts institutions around the world staged their own versions of *Tatlin's Whisper #6*. The social media platform *#YoTambienExijo* extended participation to the digital realm, and consistent online activity carried on throughout the first half of 2015.<sup>1</sup> I suggest that *#YoTambienExijo* as a work of art ends with the return of Bruguera's passport in August of 2015.<sup>2</sup> I view the attempted "re-performance" of *Tatlin's Whisper #6 (Havana Version, 2009)* on December 30, 2014, as a part of a new work (*#YoTambienExijo*) rather than a simple reiteration of the 2009 original because of the drastic difference in context and materials, not to mention the obvious fact that Bruguera was arrested before it could take place. In addition, *#YoTambienExijo's* connections to a specific political situation and the subsequent participatory performances organized by Bruguera and staged around the world further separate *#YoTambienExijo* from the original *Tatlin's Whisper #6*. In short, Bruguera used the same basic artistic elements of *Tatlin's Whisper #6* in *#YoTambienExijo*, but these altered elements were meant to bring *Tatlin's Whisper #6* into an entirely new artistic context. The return of Bruguera's passport in August of 2015 restored her rights as a Cuban citizen and signified a small, yet meaningful victory in her quest for expression without persecution in her home country and effectively ended *#YoTambienExijo*.

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<sup>1</sup> In this thesis, *#YoTambienExijo* (italicized) refers to the work of art as a whole.

<sup>2</sup> Bruguera has continued to use the *#YoTambienExijo* platform to promote her artistic activity, particularly the *Hannah Arendt International Institute of Artivism*, as well as to share news items and critical responses with a wider audience.

Much of the discourse surrounding Bruguera's activities during the period in question focused on her persecution by the Cuban government for dissident behavior. Bruguera's performance associated with the *Hannah Arendt International Institute for Artivism* (2015) was the most frequently addressed artwork from this time period. Bruguera and numerous volunteers read Hannah Arendt's *The Origins of Totalitarianism* in its entirety, projecting their voices into the street from Bruguera's home through a speaker. A confrontation between Bruguera and government officials concluded the performance. Perhaps this performance received widespread attention in the press because it utilized conventional notions of what an artwork or a performance should be. More likely, it is because this performance component of the *Hannah Arendt Institute* occurred during the opening week of the Havana Biennial. This was the first Biennial in Cuba that was easily accessible to American citizens as a consequence of the relaxation of U.S. travel sanctions, which resulted in a greater presence of American art world figures.<sup>3</sup> The thorough coverage of the *Hannah Arendt Institute* is different from the cultural reception of *#YoTambienExijo* (2014-2015). *#YoTambienExijo* is a complex work of art that includes Bruguera's first arrest for her attempt to perform in La Plaza de Revolución on December 30, 2014, the numerous versions of the performance that took place around the world in April, and the social media participation associated with the project. *#YoTambienExijo* has not been satisfactorily addressed *as a work of art in its own right*, despite plentiful opportunities for a meaningful discussion of political and participatory art in the twenty-first century. I assert that the work's meaning and significance lie in its symbolic and real defiance of power structures by exposing the conflict between official ideology and actuality in Cuba. Through this exposure,

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<sup>3</sup> Julia Cooke, "Art in the Time of Politics: In the Afterglow of Détente at Havana's Twelfth Biennial," *Virginia Quarterly Review* 91, no. 4 (Fall 2015): 186-89.

*#YoTambienExijo* gave the Cuban people a role in the creation and construction of recent Cuban history.

The various performances that took place around the world in April of 2015 are reminiscent of Alan Kaprow's Happenings. The social media component of *#YoTambienExijo*, however, expands the category of performance art as it has been understood since the 1970s through participation in the digital realm. I argue that this social media activity is a form of political action that Bruguera has used as a medium in this work. This necessitates a re-evaluation of the categories of spectator, participant, and audience as they relate to participatory art of the twenty-first century. In addition, I examine activist-oriented online activity (hacktivism) and its impact on real world events in order to support the argument for the validity of online activity as an effective means of political action.

Finally, *#YoTambienExijo* had both a concrete and symbolic impact at a crucial turning point in Cuba's history. As stated previously, the return of Bruguera's passport advanced her pursuit of the freedom of artistic expression on the island and signified an important step towards a hopeful future that includes dialogue without persecution in Cuba. Symbolically, *#YoTambienExijo* inserts the voices of the Cuban people into the current political situation. The understanding of recent history is currently controlled by the Cuban government, as are relationships with the outside world. By forcing the government to either allow or condemn her actions, Bruguera exposed the incongruence between the traditional utopian socialist doctrines and the reality of censorship, oppression, and exploitation of the Cuban people.

Before delving into *#YoTambienExijo*, it is necessary to account for some methodological obstacles that arise when looking at a complex work of art of this kind. First, reports on Bruguera's activities in Cuba are often conflicting or scant. This is due to a number of factors,

among them the isolation of Cuba (although this isolation will likely diminish in the future) from the global sphere and the role of gossip as a means of circulating information in the country itself. The nature of the work necessitates a reliance on both first-hand and second-hand accounts to reconstruct its form; conflicting reports are indicated where they arise. Second, the critical theory and discourse surrounding socially oriented and participatory artworks are still evolving. There is still debate on how to classify works like *#YoTambienExijo*, or if they should even be considered art. Further the criteria for evaluating the quality of such works are also still evolving. This thesis seeks to assess *#YoTambienExijo* as a work of art whose significance lies in its public protest of the political situation in Cuba by creating a subversive space of free discussion as well as inserting a different voice into the historical narrative of Cuba, which is currently written exclusively by the authoritarian government.

Finally, the performance Bruguera attempted to mount in December of 2014 was stopped by the intervention of the Cuban government. As such, the performance did not actually take place. However, according to Lucy Lippard's essay "The Dematerialization of Art," art does not have to be centered on sensory experience or even technically exist at all. In her list of examples of dematerialized art, Lippard includes Robert Morris's plans for a piece consisting of a circular mound of earth to be erected at the Dallas Fort Worth International airport, as well as Sol LeWitt's buried cube for the same site.<sup>4</sup> Neither of these works came to fruition, but both are still studied and referenced in the context of art historical writing and museum exhibitions. In light of Lippard's treatment of these works, I consider that the performance component of *#YoTambienExijo* from December 2014 still warrants discussion as a proposed work of art even though Bruguera was arrested before it could take place.

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<sup>4</sup> Lucy Lippard, "The Dematerialization of Art," *Art International* 12, no. 2 (February 1968), reprinted in Lucy Lippard, *Changing: Essays in Art Criticism*, (New York: Dutton, 1971).

While *The Hannah Arendt International Institute for Artivism* is undoubtedly a significant work that occurred within the time frame discussed here, it is not a part of *#YoTambienExijo*. The *Hannah Arendt Institute* is a separate and independent project that combines performance, protest, community participation, and pedagogy. While these elements can also be found in *#YoTambienExijo*, the premise of the *Hannah Arendt Institute* is closer to that of Bruguera's *Catedra Arte Conducta* (2002-09) in that its function is ultimately educational, not performative. Furthermore, because the *Hannah Arendt Institute* is an ongoing project (Bruguera launched a successful crowdsourcing campaign in March of 2016 to fund its future activities), the artistic and political impact of the work cannot be currently assessed. Upon its completion, it will undoubtedly deserve critical exploration.

### **The Cuban Context**

In order to correctly approach *#YoTambienExijo* as a work of art and convey its political significance, it must be understood in the context of both Bruguera's career and recent Cuban history. The year 1959 marks the beginning of the "Glorious Revolution," as well as the beginning of the Cuban view of the political future based on an ideal, egalitarian, and socialist utopia.<sup>5</sup> This view of history starkly contrasts with that of the United States. While the U.S. continued to go through drastic changes in the social, political, and economic arenas, Cuba continued with the singular narrative of progress towards this same socialist utopia. In 1960, Fidel Castro aligned the nation with the East in the Cold War conflict through an economic pact

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<sup>5</sup> Recent history in Cuba seems to begin with the Revolution. Tour guides, for example, never speak of history or governments prior to 1959; they especially do not speak of Fulgencio Battista. Further, the Revolution is perceived as ongoing. The Special Period, then, was another battle to be fought in pursuit of the victorious Revolution.

with the Soviet Union.<sup>6</sup> The Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962 solidified the United States embargo and subsequent isolation of Cuba from the U.S. (and a large majority of the Western world) for the next half-century.<sup>7</sup>

Cuba could be considered the quintessential example of a socialist revolutionary state in Latin America. Following the implementation of Castro's new government, all Cuban citizens were guaranteed free health care and education, as well as support and protection for the elderly. Many Cuban people embraced the idea of a collective community, in which, ideally, everyone was treated equally. Lawyers were not supposed to make more money than janitors, and, in stark contrast to the United States, inequality relating to race and gender was not an issue because all citizens were theoretically treated the same by the government. A strong sense of national pride and a connection to the leaders of the Revolution (most notably the apotheosis of Che Guevara) became fundamental parts of Cuban social reality and mentality. Along with this new age in Cuban society, however, came the stark rejection of anything that even slightly resembled counter-revolutionary tendencies. Political persecution and censorship thus became a part of Cuban social reality for those who did not subscribe to the political aims and beliefs of the Revolution. As Castro said in his oft-quoted speech to intellectuals on June 30, 1961, "Within the Revolution, everything; against the Revolution, no rights at all."<sup>8</sup> Thus, the utopian socialist narrative of equality and just government in Cuba is inevitably paired with oppression and censorship, and it has been that way in Cuban society since the initial success of the Revolution.

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<sup>6</sup> Richard Gott, *Cuba: A New History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004), 190-211.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 190-230.

<sup>8</sup> Fidel Castro, "Speech to Intellectuals," (speech, Havana, Cuba, June 30, 1961), Castro Speech Database, <http://lanic.utexas.edu/project/castro/db/1961/19610630.html>.

When Communism collapsed in Eastern Europe in 1989, Cuba's close relationship and economic reliance on the Soviet Union put the nation in a difficult and precarious situation.<sup>9</sup> Cuba entered what Fidel Castro referred to as "the Special Period," a challenging time that called on Cuban citizens to march loyally and spiritedly on, despite extreme economic hardships and the shortage of almost all resources, including fuel and food.<sup>10</sup> Bruguera recalls that "people were losing their sight from vitamin deficiencies, their muscles were atrophying—a lot of weird stuff started happening, [and] it was hard."<sup>11</sup> The Special Period marks the collapse of "absolute equality" in Cuban society. The government had no choice but to relax its economic policies, eventually allowing some private businesses (such as the privately owned restaurants known as *paladares*) and increasingly relying on tourism. A dual-currency system was also implemented, introducing a "convertible Cuban peso" (CUC) that was equivalent to the United States dollar. Cubans who came into contact with CUCs, such as taxi drivers or anyone who came in contact with the tourism industry, were at a new economic advantage in society.<sup>12</sup> Artists are included in this sphere of contact, and in recent history, the Havana Biennial has been a main vehicle for artists to market and sell their works to an international audience.<sup>13</sup> Thus, the collapse of the Soviet Union triggered a rupture in the socialist, utopian narrative of Cuban history.<sup>14</sup> The recent thawing of relations between the United States and Cuba is another rupture in that narrative. For

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<sup>9</sup> Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, Cuba entered a similar political and economical relationship with Venezuela. The recent collapse of that country had similar results, perhaps prompting the recent thawing of relations with the United States.

<sup>10</sup> Beth Tamar Rosenblum, "From 'Special Period' Aesthetics to Global Relevance in Cuban Art: Tania Bruguera, Carlos Garaicoa, Los Carpinteros" (PhD diss., University of California at Los Angeles, 2013), 3-5.

<sup>11</sup> Travis Jeppesen, "Tania Bruguera: In the Studio," *Art News* 103, no. 8 (September 2015): 132.

<sup>12</sup> Tamar Rosenblum, "From 'Special Period' Aesthetics to Global Relevance in Cuban Art," 3-5.

<sup>13</sup> Laurie Rojas, "Artists Protest in Support of Bruguera," *The Art Newspaper*, May 2015: 12.

<sup>14</sup> Catherine Davies, "Surviving (on) the Soup of Signs: Postmodernism, Politics and Culture in Cuba," in *Cultural Politics in Latin America*, eds. Amy Brooksbank Jones and Ronaldo Munck (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 74-92.

the first time in over half a century, Cuba's boundaries are open to American tourism and the likely possibility of capitalist economic advance. Cuba is on the threshold of fully entering the global sphere, economically, politically, and socially. The Internet was introduced among sections of the population in recent years, and while usage is concentrated in Havana, the lifting of the embargo would facilitate the spread of the digital across the island.

Tania Bruguera, born in 1968 in Havana, came of age during the Special Period. She attended San Alejandro Art Academy in Havana before completing her studies at the Instituto Superior del Arte (ISA). Bruguera now exhibits internationally at museums and galleries as well as on the biennial circuit. She has been the recipient of numerous arts awards, including a Guggenheim Fellowship and the Prince Claus Prize, and has been selected by a jury of art professionals for the short list of possible recipients for the Hugo Boss Award (administered by the Guggenheim Foundation) in 2016. Bruguera, like many members of the Cuban art community, currently lives in the United States as well as Havana.

From the beginning of her career, Bruguera has focused on the political. Bruguera's thesis exhibit at ISA, *Homenaje á Ana Mendieta* (1993-94), consisted of re-performances of Ana Mendieta's that were originally executed in the United States (Figures 1 and 2). Mendieta was born in Cuba, but was relocated to the United States in 1961 as part of the United States initiative Operation Peter Pan.<sup>15</sup> Bruguera wanted to bring Mendieta into a Cuban context, making the artist's work accessible to a Cuban audience.<sup>16</sup> Other early works, such as *El Peso de la Culpa*

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<sup>15</sup> Operation Peter Pan re-settled numerous Cuban children in the United States shortly after the Revolution. The underground initiative, also known as Operation Pedro Pan, was active from 1960 to 1962. Both of Mendieta's parents later joined her in the United States.

<sup>16</sup> For more on Ana Mendieta, see: Stephanie Rosenthal, ed., *Traces: Ana Mendieta* (London: Hayward Publishing, 2013). For more on the relationship between Bruguera's and Mendieta's work, see: Rhonda Barbour, "Performance of Memory and Ritual: Selected Works by Ana Mendieta and Tania Bruguera" (master's thesis, University of Southern California, 2013).

(The Burden of Guilt, 1997), were centered on the artist's body, which she put through stressful and self-deprecating circumstances in order to make various political statements about the Cuban experience (Figure 3).<sup>17</sup> If a turning point in Bruguera's practice can be identified, it was most certainly *Cátedra Arte Conducta* (Behavior Art School, Figures 4 through 6). This work consisted of a school of experimental art that Bruguera founded in association with ISA; the school was the first of its kind in Cuba. She later exhibited *Cátedra Arte Conducta* as an artwork, and has received much critical attention for her innovative pedagogical approach.<sup>18</sup> A more recent project, *Immigration Movement International* (2010-15), was organized in connection with the art organization Creative Time in New York (Figure 7). This work included public workshops, events, and cooperative actions with social organizations and immigrants in the city. *Immigration Movement International* explored the definitions of "immigrant" as an identity and some of the complex issues facing immigrants today.<sup>19</sup> This work continued the thread of community engagement and participation in Bruguera's oeuvre.

### **A Sequence of Events**

On December 17, 2014, from Vatican City, Tania Bruguera penned an open letter to Raúl Castro, Barack Obama, and Pope Francis, in which she congratulated them on their agreement to

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<sup>17</sup> José Muñoz, "Performing Greater Cuba: Tania Bruguera and the Burden of Guilt," in *Holy Terrors: Latin American Women Perform*, ed. Roselyn Constantino and Diana Taylor (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), 401-415.

<sup>18</sup> For excellent interviews by Tom Finkelpearl with Bruguera and Claire Bishop regarding *Cátedra Arte Conducta*, see Tom Finkelpearl, *What We Made: Conversations on Art and Social Cooperation*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013).

<sup>19</sup> Tania Bruguera, "*Immigration Movement International*," Long Term Projects, [www.taniabruquera.com](http://www.taniabruquera.com).

restore diplomatic relations between the United States and Cuba (Appendix A).<sup>20</sup> However, the tone of the letter quickly shifted from congratulatory to confrontational:

Very well then, Raúl. As a Cuban, today I call for the right to know what is being planned with our lives and, as part of this new phase, for the establishment of a politically transparent process in which we will all be able to participate, and to have the right to hold different opinions without punishment.<sup>21</sup>

Bruguera began each paragraph of her letter with the phrase “As a Cuban, today I demand...” She called for a new governmental transparency within the government to allow for the participation of the people in the new phase of Cuban history. Bruguera also addressed complex issues that she felt the island would face in the future with the impending encroachment of capitalism. Bruguera’s letter implied that the new capitalist presence would dictate the future of the island and the Cuban people. For example, she wrote of the proverbial factory worker, the ideal diligent worker of the Cuban socialist utopia, and suggested that with the arrival of capitalism this citizen would be forgotten and mistreated by his government in its pursuit of financial profits. Most importantly, Bruguera demanded “the right of peaceful protest in the streets to support or denounce any government decision without fear of reprisal.”<sup>22</sup> Bruguera closed her letter with a request and a call to assemble:

As a Cuban, today I demand the right to be a political being—not merely an economic [entity] or symbolic exchange to make history. As a Cuban, Raúl, today I want to know the vision for the nation we are building. As an artist, Raul, I propose you today to exhibit [*Tatlin's Whisper #6*] at the Plaza de la Revolución (Revolution Square). Let's open the microphones and let all voices be heard.... Today I'd like to [propose] that Cubans take to the streets wherever they may be on December 30th to celebrate, not the end of a blockade/embargo, but the

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<sup>20</sup> This letter was originally composed in Spanish, and was thus intended (originally) for a Latin American artist. Bruguera then translated the text to English for a wider, international audience. The text reproduced here is the artist’s translation.

<sup>21</sup> Bruguera, “Open Letter to the Heads of State,” December 17, 2014, Blog, [www.taniabruquera.com](http://www.taniabruquera.com).

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

beginning of our civil rights. Let's make sure it's the Cuban people who will benefit from this new historic moment. Our homeland is what hurts us.<sup>23</sup>

Bruguera returned to Cuba on December 26, shortly after her letter was released.<sup>24</sup>

Bruguera wrote and dispatched a second letter to the party newspaper *Granma*. Of course, this letter was not published in the paper, but it did circulate in online communities. Inspired by Bruguera's statements, a "volunteer civic platform" formed under the aegis of #YoTambienExijo, adopting the definitive phrase "I demand" from Bruguera's letter.<sup>25</sup> Bruguera incorporated this platform into her project as a way to promote the December 30th re-performance of *Tatlin's Whisper #6*.<sup>26</sup> The Facebook group page created for #YoTambienExijo and the event page for the December 30 performance had over 1,000 followers in a matter of days.<sup>27</sup>

Bruguera met with Ruben del Valle, the President of the National Council of the Arts, in a public forum in Havana to discuss the upcoming performance. Del Valle attempted to persuade Bruguera to cancel the event or to hold the performance in a different location, such as a school or a gallery. Bruguera declined, stating that the work required an open and public space, not a location associated with an institution. Del Valle then told her that if she carried on with the performance, she would face "legal and personal consequences."<sup>28</sup> On December 29, 2014,

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<sup>23</sup> Bruguera, "Open Letter to the Heads of State," December 17, 2014, Blog, [www.taniabruquera.com](http://www.taniabruquera.com). Brackets in original.

<sup>24</sup> Coco Fusco, "The State of Detention: Performance, Politics, and the Cuban Public," *e-flux*. <http://www.e-flux.com/announcements/on-the-detention-of-cuban-artist-tania-bruguera-by-coco-fusco>.

<sup>25</sup> "Yo tambien exijo" translates to English as "I also demand," "I also require," "I also call for," etcetera.

<sup>26</sup> Bruguera, "Communique #1," December 20, 2014, and "Communique #2," December 22, 2014, Blog, [www.taniabruquera.com](http://www.taniabruquera.com).

<sup>27</sup> Bruguera, "Communique #2," December 22, 2014, Blog, [www.taniabruquera.com](http://www.taniabruquera.com).

<sup>28</sup> Bruguera, "The Work Will Be Performed," December 27, 2014, Blog, [www.taniabruquera.com](http://www.taniabruquera.com).

Bruguera met with the Directorate General of the National Revolutionary Police, the government organization that grants permits to publically gather in Cuba. Del Valle predicted that they would decline her application for a permit, and he was correct.<sup>29</sup> Despite the very clear tone of forbiddance from the government, Bruguera declared, “the work will be performed.”<sup>30</sup>

On December 25, Bruguera posted instructions for the new iteration of the performance of *Tatlin’s Whisper #6* on her blog (Appendix B). *Tatlin’s Whisper #6* was originally performed in 2009 at the Wifredo Lam Center in conjunction with the Havana Biennial (Figures 8 through 11). The setting for the 2009 performance consisted of an orange backdrop, a platform with a podium, a microphone, and two actors dressed in military garb, one holding a dove. For one minute each, any audience member was allowed to take the stage and say whatever he or she wanted. One of the military guards placed a dove on the shoulder of each participant as he or she took the stage. Some audience members used their time to voice their support for the Cuban government; others used it to decry its injustices; one participant simply cried for the entire minute (Appendix C). After the minute of free speech was complete, the dove was removed, and a guard escorted the participant off of the stage. Audience members were given cameras with flash bulbs, documenting the performance while simultaneously alluding to political press conferences or speeches. This work directly refers to a historical moment: Fidel Castro’s first speech in Havana in 1959, following the victory of the Revolution (Figures 12 and 13). During this speech, a dove landed on Fidel’s shoulder and remained there for its duration. The planned December 2014 performance replaced these highly politicized symbols (the podium, the institutional setting, the dove, and the military actors) with common, accessible materials: a

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<sup>29</sup> Bruguera, “The Work Will Be Performed,” December 27, 2014, Blog, [www.taniabruquera.com](http://www.taniabruquera.com).

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

platform of some kind and a microphone or megaphone. In fact, aside from a sound amplifying agent, there were no strict requirements for materials.<sup>31</sup>

Reports conflict on what actually happened on December 30, 2014. Some accounts claim that Bruguera was arrested before departing for the Plaza de la Revolución, while others state that she was arrested on her way there. Even more puzzling are the inconsistent numbers of participants reported to have been arrested, which range from a dozen to fifty.<sup>32</sup> Regardless, Bruguera was arrested and jailed for three days, charged with disrupting public order.<sup>33</sup> A petition demanding her release was circulated among artists inside and outside Cuba and gained 1,000 signatures while Bruguera was incarcerated.<sup>34</sup> She was released on January 1, 2015, but authorities confiscated her passport. She was told she could get her passport back if she temporarily left the country, but she knew that this would have allowed the government to potentially exile her while she was away.<sup>35</sup> As the government processed her case, Bruguera was commanded to stay within Havana, putting her under what some have called “city-arrest.”<sup>36</sup>

In a blog post from March 2, 2015, Bruguera wrote that she was frightened by the government, but not for the sake of her own wellbeing. It was others who were close to her or in

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<sup>31</sup> One possible exception can be found in step 3 of the instructions, which offers options on how to signal the end of a participant’s one minute: “Each group to perform this piece can choose in what way they will indicate that the intervention time is over. We suggest: clapping, finger snaps, a buzzer alarm sound, a musical instrument.” This step takes the form of a suggestion and clearly leaves the choice up to the organizers. The inclusion of a dove is not specified in the instructions. Tania Bruguera, “Declaration of Principles for Artistic Action,” December 25, 2014, Blog, [www.taniabruquera.com](http://www.taniabruquera.com).

<sup>32</sup> Jeppesen, “In the Studio,” 132; “Testing the Limits,” *Art Monthly*, no. 383, (February 2015): 13; Randal Archibold, “Cuba Again Arrests Artist Seeking Dissidents’ Release,” *New York Times*, January 1, 2015.

<sup>33</sup> Holland Cotter, “Havana’s Vital Biennial Was Trumped by a Stifled Voice,” *New York Times*, July 1, 2015.

<sup>34</sup> Jeppesen, “In the Studio,” 132.

<sup>35</sup> Cotter, “Havana’s Vital Biennial.”

<sup>36</sup> Luis Camnitzer, “Tania Bruguera’s *Tatlin’s Whisper #6* and the *Hannah Arendt International Institute for Artivism*,” *Art Agenda*, May 28, 2015. <http://www.art-agenda.com>.

contact with her that she feared for. She realized, however, that this went directly against the purpose of the performance that was to have been staged on December 30, that is, to stand up against self-censorship and intimidation by an oppressive government. After this realization, she re-entered society, participating in workshops, teaching, and socializing.<sup>37</sup> According to the news coverage of #YoTambienExijo and Bruguera's blog posts, the police or government agents followed and harassed her persistently during the following months. She was labeled a dissident and counter-revolutionary by the government and its agencies, including the Unión de Escritores y Artistas de Cuba (Union of Writers and Authors of Cuba, UNEAC). The authorities also implied that she was directly involved with the CIA, a tactic intended to alienate her.<sup>38</sup> Her phone and e-mail were likely hacked and surveyed by the government, and she was flagged and followed whenever she entered an institution or public space.<sup>39</sup> Her friends and associates were also questioned and subjected to intimidation tactics (threats of prohibition from exhibiting in state-run institutions, severely limiting their artistic activity and livelihood).<sup>40</sup> Bruguera was followed at first, and over time, the police and government agents increasingly subjected her to surveillance, interrogation, and intimidation.<sup>41</sup>

In the meantime, Bruguera's actions were gaining international attention from news and art media outlets. Lazaro Saavedra, a Cuban artist, composed several e-mails that were circulated

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<sup>37</sup> Tania Bruguera, "Square Meters of Loneliness," March 2, 2015, Blog, [www.taniabruquera.com](http://www.taniabruquera.com).

<sup>38</sup> Victoria Burnett, "Blurring Boundaries Between Art and Activism in Cuba," *New York Times*, January 23, 2015.

<sup>39</sup> Bruguera speaking of a trip to the airport: "Recently, a visiting friend asked me to go with him to the airport to say good-bye. I sat down waiting for him to check in. Five minutes later, four people, all dressed [in] plain clothes with little ID badges, came and sat down around me." Jeppesen, "In the Studio," 132.

<sup>40</sup> Rojas, "Artists Protest in Support of Bruguera," 12.

<sup>41</sup> Gerardo Mosquera, "Tania Bruguera: Artivism and Repression in Cuba, An Eyewitness Report," *Walker Art Center Magazine*, June 17, 2015, <http://www.walkerart.org/magazine/2015/tania-bruguera-artivism-gerardo-mosquera-cuba>.

among members of the Cuban art community. Saavedra claimed that Bruguera's actions were superfluous and disingenuous; there was no need to bring attention to the fact that Cubans did not have a voice in their government because they were well aware of their own reality. He viewed *#YoTambienExijo* as a publicity stunt that capitalized on the unfortunate lack of civil rights in Cuba. Interestingly, he stated that no matter what happened, prohibition or permission, a performance would inevitably have taken place.<sup>42</sup>

This increase in international attention (to date, the *#YoTambienExijo* Facebook page has over 20,000 likes) led to the large number of performances that were executed in April of 2015 in accordance with Bruguera's instructions from December of 2014. These internationally staged performances took place in numerous cities and often in association with cultural organizations or museums, including Miami (Tower of Liberty), New York (in association with Creative Time), Los Angeles (the Hammer Museum), London (Turbine Hall, Tate Modern), and Rotterdam (The Van Abbe Museum) (Figures 14 and 15).<sup>43</sup> The Miami performance actually took place on December 30, 2014 in response to Bruguera's initial call for international participation. Regardless the execution date, all of the performances abroad followed Bruguera's instructions for *Tatlin's Whisper #6*. However, the instructions allowed for flexibility and chance, so these performances were realized in different ways. For example, the New York performance took place in Times Square, and participants stood on top of a crate and spoke to

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<sup>42</sup> Lazaro Saavedra, "Tania Gana, los Derechos Civiles Continúan Perdiendo," reproduced in "Se abre el debate," *Enrisco*, December 31, 2014. <http://enrisco.blogspot.com/2014/12/se-abre-el-debate.html>.

<sup>43</sup> Enrique Flor, "Celebran 'performance' en solidaridad con Cuba," *el Nuevo Herald*, December 30, 2014. <http://www.elnuevoherald.com/noticias/sur-de-la-florida/article5191899.html>; "Yo Tambien Exijo," TateShots, Tate Modern, April 25, 2015. <http://www.tate.org.uk/context-comment/video/yo-tambien-exijo-tateshots>; Carolina Miranda, "Tania Bruguera can't leave Cuba, so the Hammer will stage work in her honor," *Los Angeles Times*, April 9, 2015.

the crowd.<sup>44</sup> The performance at the Hammer Museum took place indoors, and participants mounted a stage and spoke into a microphone on a stand.<sup>45</sup> In Miami, the performance took place on the steps of the Tower of Liberty (Torre de la Libertad). A banner with “#YoTambienExijo” and the Cuban flag hung on the front of the building, and participants ascended the front steps and spoke into a microphone, often in Spanish and to much applause.

For the duration of Bruguera’s forced residence in Havana, she remained artistically active. She began renovations of her home, which was to house the *Hannah Arendt International Institute for Artivism*, and she began the planning process for the future activities of the organization. Her performance associated with this project that took place during the first week of the Biennial is well documented, including the denial of her entry to the Museo de Bellas Artes for the Tomás Sanchez opening, her performative reading of Hannah Arendt’s *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951), and the conclusion of that performative reading that was completed by the aggressive confrontation with government officials and witnessed by several art world figures (including scholars Gerardo Mosquera and Luis Camnitzer).<sup>46</sup> Bruguera’s passport was

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<sup>44</sup> A microphone was present at the New York performance, but it appears that it was utilized for recording purposes, not to amplify the voices of participants.

<sup>45</sup> For videos of these performances, see “#YoTambienExijo: A Re-Staging of Tania Bruguera’s Tatlin’s Whisper #6,” YouTube video, 1:46, from the performance held at the Hammer Museum on April 13, 2015, posted by the Hammer Museum, April 15, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jOQ4cNQdL74>; “#YoTambienExijo en Miami,” YouTube video, 4:30, from the performance held at the Tower of Liberty in Miami on December 30, 2014, posted by *El Nuevo Herald*, December 31, 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6ssr3AQI1qc>; “Yo También Exijo | TateShots,” YouTube video, 3:36, from the performance held at the Tate Modern’s Turbine Hall on April 18, 2015, posted by the Tate on April 23, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CThPLk-hR1w>; “#YoTambienExijo: A Restaging of Tatlin’s Whisper #6,” YouTube video, 1:32:44, from the performance held in Times Square and organized by Creative Time on April 13, 2015, posted by Creative Time on April 16, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h5aUYJEk1NM>.

<sup>46</sup> Camnitzer, “Tania Bruguera’s Tatlin’s Whisper #6 and the Hannah Arendt International Institute for Artivism.” Mosquera, “Artivism and Repression.”

finally returned in August of 2015, and Bruguera returned to New York to begin an artist residency in the mayor's office.

### **The Artist as Organizer**

In her discussion of participatory art in her book *Artificial Hells*, Claire Bishop has pointed out the need for a new definition of authorship in the twenty-first century.<sup>47</sup> Rather than just creating objects or environments, artists can create *livable situations*. Bishop sees the artist as a director or community organizer, the leader of a group of people working to make something happen in the real world. Jeremy Deller's *Battle of Orgreave* (2001) is the quintessential example of this new genre of participatory art.<sup>48</sup> This work required restaging a complex political conflict between police and protesting miners that occurred in the United Kingdom in 1984 (Figures 16 and 17). Deller had to organize historical re-enactment societies, participants not associated with these societies, and a multitude of crewmembers. Deller did not himself participate in the re-enactment, but he orchestrated the entire operation. Similarly, Santiago Sierra's *133 Persons Paid to Have Their Hair Dyed Blonde* (2001) required the organization of the participants, the dying of their hair, and their placement throughout the city of Venice and within the Venice Biennale itself (Figures 18 and 19).<sup>49</sup> The participants in *133 Persons* were illegal street vendors. Normally, these vendors would not be present at a prestigious art event like the Venice Biennale. Sierra made their presence unavoidable, and forced the overlooked or underground activities of these vendors into the view of those who were attending the Biennale. Tania Bruguera's efforts to execute *#YoTambienExijo*, the dissemination

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<sup>47</sup> Bishop, *Artificial Hells*, 32.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 30-37.

<sup>49</sup> Claire Bishop, "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics," *October*, no. 110 (Fall 2004): 73.

of the performances executed outside of Havana, and maintenance of the social media activity should be seen in the same light. The goals and approaches of Deller, Sierra, and Bruguera are radically different, but each work discussed here involves the artist as the organizer of a specific social situation that is the work of art.

One aspect of this directorial or organizational approach that Bishop describes is the setting of parameters. There are some well-known and quite obvious historical precedents for the use of parameters in participatory performance art. Allan Kaprow's Happenings of the 1960s are the quintessential paradigm for participatory performance. These works involved a set of instructions (referred to as scores) for participants, which, when followed, resulted in a unique artistic event, which Kaprow designated as the Happening. These parameters allow for the element of chance to affect the outcome of the artwork. Kaprow also asserted that Happenings only took place *once*; that is, at a specific moment in time. The original performance, which is cited as the work of art, could not be exactly repeated. These original performances could be recreated, though. Several Happenings (*Fluids*, originally performed in 1967, is a popular example) have been executed according to their original scores in recent years. Kaprow's artworks as well as his writing have had a profound impact on participatory performance and the wider realm of art in general since his initial activities in the 1960s.<sup>50</sup>

Kaprow's scores for Happenings are comparable to Bruguera's directions for *#YoTambienExijo*. Bruguera's parameters for the re-performance of *Tatlin's Whisper #6* are contained in the instructions she released on her blog in December of 2014. Bruguera's instructions are specific and clear. Participants are given one minute of time on the

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<sup>50</sup> Amelia Jones, *The Artist's Body* (New York: Phaidon, 2000), 28, 59. For more information, see Allan Kaprow, *Essays on the Blurring of Art and Life*, ed. Jeff Kelley (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993); Allan Kaprow and Jean-Jacques Lebel, *Assemblage, Environments, & Happenings* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1966).

platform/stage/soap box. They are to speak into a microphone or megaphone: something that projects their voice. The language that they use is to remain peaceful; incendiary words or calls to arms are not endorsed or tolerated within the parameters of the performance. Finally, each participant must speak for *himself or herself*. No representatives or sponsors for external parties are allowed to participate.<sup>51</sup> In the social media realm, the common language of online communication sets the parameters. On Twitter, for example, statements are limited to 140 characters, which is comparable to the one minute that physical participants are allowed in the actual performance. In order to participate in *#YoTambienExijo*, online participants must include the hashtag in their Tweet or post, which is comparable to stepping onto the stage or box.<sup>52</sup>

These parameters allow for flexibility and creativity on the part of participants and organizers whenever they should choose to execute the performance. The end of each minute can be signaled in any way the organizers choose.<sup>53</sup> Requirements regarding the physical platform are not specified. In the performances that took place in April, myriad different objects were utilized. Most importantly, *what* the participants should say is not specified beyond the prohibition of violence or offensive, incendiary speech. Each speaker can say what he or she wishes about any topic. In accordance with the original Cuban context of the work, which is presumably explained to the participants by the organizer along with the instructions, speakers

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<sup>51</sup> Bruguera, "Declaration of Principles for Artistic Action," December 25, 2014, Blog, [www.taniabruquera.com](http://www.taniabruquera.com).

<sup>52</sup> On social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter, a hashtag (#) is used to link different posts through shared terms. For example, if a post includes the hashtag "#art," a user can click on that hashtag and be directed to a page showing all of the posts that contain that hashtag; presumably, these posts would all be about art.

<sup>53</sup> Bruguera, "Declaration of Principles for Artistic Action," December 25, 2014, Blog, [www.taniabruquera.com](http://www.taniabruquera.com).

would ideally address an issue relevant to the local or global community.<sup>54</sup> While this is not specified in Bruguera's instructions, the respect for other participants and the intolerance of inflammatory or improper language is.<sup>55</sup> In the performance that was to take place in the Plaza de Revolución on December 30, the only requirement was that Cubans participate; that they speak their mind about the future of their country and their society.<sup>56</sup> The sixty seconds to speak and be heard are thus influenced by a sense of social responsibility, loosely guiding the topics addressed by participants. However, *#YoTambienExijo* is not aligned with any specific political party, group, or position and allows participants freedom of opinion, a significant point that will be revisited later on.

Bruguera has long stated that she takes reality as her medium.<sup>57</sup> *#YoTambienExijo*, like any other project that takes place in the realm of the "real," allows for the element of chance to determine the outcome of the work.<sup>58</sup> While Bruguera was undoubtedly conscious of the fact that government authorities were not likely to let her carry out her performance in the Plaza de la Revolución, she carried on with her plan. She did not know when or where she would be arrested, if she would at all. The government thus became a participant in the work through its reaction to Bruguera's actions.<sup>59</sup> While the contemporary examples of Deller and Sierra illustrate the artist as director or organizer, a comparison of *#YoTambienExijo* with two works that took

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<sup>54</sup> Bruguera, "Declaration of Principles for Artistic Action," December 25, 2014, Blog, [www.taniabruquera.com](http://www.taniabruquera.com). It should be noted that this is not required by Bruguera's instructions. Indeed, in the 2009 performance of *Tatlin's Whisper #6* in Havana, one participant requested that some missing equipment be returned to him.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Stephanie Schwartz, "Tania Bruguera: Between Histories," *Oxford Art Journal* 35, no. 2 (2012), 229.

<sup>58</sup> For theoretical writing on chance in art, see: Margaret Iversen, ed. *Chance* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2010).

<sup>59</sup> A similar case is Chris Burden's *Deadman* (1972), in which the artist was arrested for causing a false emergency by lying in La Cienega Boulevard surrounded by flares.

place in a similar political situation half a century prior will better place Bruguera's work in a uniquely Latin American and activist lineage.

### **Argentina in 1968: *Tucumán Arde* and *Baño***

In his book *Conceptualism in Latin American Art: Didactics of Liberation*, Luis Camnitzer cautions against generalizations of art created in Latin America.<sup>60</sup> While it is true, especially when viewed with the hindsight of history, that each nation has its own character, conflicts, and historical trajectories, Camnitzer does posit some generally shared elements in Latin American societies that support a comparison of *#YoTambienExijo* with two Argentinian precedents. On a simple level, most Latin American countries are linked by a predominant language (Spanish) and religion (Catholicism).<sup>61</sup> However, Latin American countries also generally possess utopian ideals for society and exhibit a resistance to imperialism. Crucial to the discussion of *#YoTambienExijo* and these Argentinian artworks is Camnitzer's thinking on "agitation" and "construction." Agitation can be loosely defined as the performative or political, while construction refers to formalist tendencies.<sup>62</sup> Indeed, the merging of agitation and construction was viewed as necessary in many Latin American contexts in the 1960s, and the politically turbulent climate of Argentina in 1968 is indubitably one of them.<sup>63</sup> When discussing activism in regards to *#YoTambienExijo*, the works of these Argentinian artists from a like political situation are a useful point of comparison.

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<sup>60</sup> Luis Camnitzer, *Conceptualism in Latin American Art: Didactics of Liberation* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2007), 3.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 60.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 16-21.

In 1968, Argentina had been under the power of military dictator Juan Carlos Onganía for two years. The country was rife with social unrest due to the economic policies imposed by Onganía. Repression and censorship of expression was also an issue, and an important contributing factor to the artistic actions that occurred that year. Onganía's government censored a work in the exhibition "Experiencias 68" held at the Instituto Torcuato di Tella in Buenos Aires not for directly political or derisive work by one specific artist, but for a work that utilized the thoughts of the common people as its content. Roberto Plate's work *Baño* (Bathroom, 1968) was located in a bathroom of the facility, and visitors were invited to write on the walls. The graffiti included obscene phrases and drawings, but also politically oriented statements that spoke out against Onganía and his oppressive policies.<sup>64</sup> The bathroom was taped off and guarded by policemen while the rest of the exhibition remained open; the censorship thus became part of the work, with the government as a participant.<sup>65</sup> In response to the censorship of *Baño*, many artists removed their work from the show and destroyed it in front of the di Tella Institute.<sup>66</sup>

The commonalities between Plate's bathroom and *#YoTambienExijo* are readily appropriate. Regarding activist art, Andrea Giunta writes that activist art seeks to "dissolve into life."<sup>67</sup> Both pieces utilized the thoughts of citizens regarding their government as the work's medium, and both took place within a political environment of censorship and oppression. On a deeper level, both works involve the act of censorship by the government as an important element in their composition. Bruguera's arrest prior to her intended performance in the Plaza

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<sup>64</sup> Camnitzer, *Conceptualism in Latin American Art*, 61-62. Andrea Giunta, *Avant-Garde, Internationalism, and Politics: Argentine Art in the Sixties* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007), 269.

<sup>65</sup> Camnitzer, *Conceptualism in Latin American Art*, 61.

<sup>66</sup> Giunta, *Avant-Garde, Internationalism, and Politics*, 268.

<sup>67</sup> Andrea Giunta, "Activism," in *Contemporary Art: 1989 to the Present*, ed. Alexander Dumbadze and Suzanna Hudsonson (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), 235.

could be viewed as constituting the performance itself, although this is still a radical idea even in the twenty-first century. Even though the *Hannah Arendt International Institute for Artivism* is not the focus of this discussion, there can be no question that Bruguera's confrontation with government officials and policemen upon the completion of her reading of *The Origins of Totalitarianism* functioned as the conclusion of that performance. Despite these similarities, it should be noted that Plate's *Baño* takes on a more aggressive or even violent character than *#YoTambienExijo* does. There is no requirement for civility or respect from participants in *Baño*, and vandalism, the somewhat violent defacement of property, is required in order to participate.

*Tucumán Arde* (Tucumán is Burning, 1968) was an artwork created by a collective of forty artists that employed an exhibition format and was conceived of as a direct political response to a fallacious government propaganda campaign (Figures 20 and 21). Tucumán, a rural province, was an important producer of sugar, but also a region with rates of high poverty and infant mortality. As such, the area saw radical political activity, which moved Onganía to implement a publicity campaign. Onganía's government released a fictional industrialization plan for Tucumán that was accompanied by posters that featured idealistic imagery and the slogan "Tucumán, The Garden of the Republic." *Tucumán Arde* was executed in the buildings of the Confederación General de Trabajadores de los Argentinos (General Workers Confederation of the Argentines), or the CGT, in the cities of Rosario, Santa Fe, and Buenos Aires.<sup>68</sup> The work functioned as an alternate source of information for Argentines, and the choice of a location that was outside of the institutional art framework increased its visibility and accessibility to common citizens.<sup>69</sup> The work combined a variety of formats, including collected interviews with citizens of Tucumán, photographs, and informational displays of research that directly conflicted with the

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<sup>68</sup> Camnitzer, *Conceptualism in Latin American Art*, 63-65.

<sup>69</sup> Giunta, *Avant-Garde, Internationalism, and Politics*, 275.

image of Tucumán that the Argentinian government was promoting.<sup>70</sup> The artists subversively co-opted conventional communication media to disseminate their message, and, in contrast to *#YoTambien Exijo*, *Tucumán Arde* was advertised as an inaugural biennial of avant-garde art.<sup>71</sup> The exhibition was open for two weeks in Rosario and managed to evade censorship, but only lasted a few days in Buenos Aires before being shut down by the government.<sup>72</sup> Real and impactful social change was the new aim of the arts, which reflects the purpose and execution of *#YoTambienExijo*.<sup>73</sup> Finally, *Tucumán Arde* publically exposed the conflict between official ideology and lived reality, an effect that is shared by *#YoTambienExijo*.

The similarities between the artistic events of Argentina in 1968 and Bruguera's actions in 2015 thus secure for *#YoTambienExijo* a historical and uniquely Latin American context.<sup>74</sup> All three works were conceived of and carried out in an environment of economic strife, political upheaval, censorship, and oppression of the people. However, *#YoTambienExijo* departs from its Argentinian relatives in two significant aspects: the conception of audience and participant and the complicated issue of re-enactment or re-performance.

### **The Issue of Spectatorship and Participation**

In Claire Bishop's analysis of Jeremy Deller's *Battle of Orgreave*, she identifies several different ways that the work can be experienced because of the various formats in which the work appears. She makes a distinction between primary audiences, those who saw the re-

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<sup>70</sup> Camnitzer, *Conceptualism in Latin American Art*, 65.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 66.

<sup>73</sup> Giunta, *Avant-Garde, Internationalism, and Politics*, 275.

<sup>74</sup> For the writings of the Argentinian avant garde, see: Inés Katzenstein, ed., *Listen Here Now! Argentine Art of the 1960s: Writings of the Avant-Garde* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2004).

enactment happen in person, and secondary audiences, who experience the work by viewing a documentary film (on television or a DVD), by reading a book, by listening to a CD of interviews with participants, or attending the accompanying exhibition at the Tate.<sup>75</sup> I do not view either audience's experience as inherently more authentic or legitimate than the other; rather, these two kinds of audiences simply represent two different but valid ways of experiencing the work. Bishop's concept of spectatorship is useful when considering the #YoTambienExijo's online presence and appearance in international news outlets and art publications. The work's primary audience consists of those physically present for either Bruguera's arrest on December 30 or the multiple stagings of the performance in April. However, a large portion of the audience for this work would *not* have been physically present for either of these events. Instead, these spectators (or members of the secondary audience) can experience the work secondarily through a variety of formats, including news coverage, art criticism, and blog posts by Bruguera or other Cubans, and even official statements or blog posts written by supporters of the Castro regime that name Bruguera as a dissident. These elements function as documentation for #YoTambienExijo, especially those moments that were not photographed.

How, then, do we classify who is a *participant* (as opposed to a spectator) in #YoTambienExijo and who is not? In Deller's *Battle of Orgreave*, participation is limited to those who played a part in the "battle" (miners or historical actors) and the various crewmembers that partook in the creation and execution of the project. If the Battle of Orgreave is viewed as an example of participatory art, then it could be assumed that in order to be a participant, one must

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<sup>75</sup> Bishop goes on to explore the defunct binary of active and passive spectatorship in this passage, a valuable asset to those interested in participatory art forms. Bishop, *Artificial Hells*, 37.

not only be physically present, but also take part in the action. This exclusive understanding of participation as dependent on physicality is complicated and, in fact, defeated in *#YoTambienExijo* by the incorporation of the digital world as a participatory aspect of the work's medium.

In his essay "Online Activism as a Participatory Form of Storytelling," digital media scholar Marco Deseriis outlines three necessary traits of a networked (online) participatory narrative:

1. A networked narrative describes an initially unsolved situation, conflict, clue, or dilemma (denotative function).
2. A networked narrative [requires] its addressee to undertake action and play a role in [the narrative] (performing function).
3. A networked narrative allows for transmission of a set of rules, an ethics, or a system of beliefs that resonate with the nodes of the network to which it is addressed (pragmatic function).<sup>76</sup>

To simplify this technical jargon, the requirements for online participation in a narrative are an unresolved conflict, an active role to play in the progression of the narrative, and a set of ethics or rules that resonate with the online community. The unresolved conflict in *#YoTambienExijo* is the lack of freedom of expression without fear of persecution and the unsound practices of the government that are allowed to persist as a result of this lack. The action or role that social media participants take on when they include the hashtag "#YoTambienExijo" in their post is directly comparable to those who physically participate in the performance; in a given amount of space (time), participants are able to speak on whatever topic they choose. The

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<sup>76</sup> Marco Deseriis, "Online Activism as a Participatory Form of Storytelling," in *Art and Activism in the Age of Globalization*, ed. Lieven de Cauter, Ruben de Roo, and Karel Vanhaesebrouch (Rotterdam: NAI Publishers, 2011), 250.

third requirement, of a set of rules or ethics, is contained within Bruguera's instructions for the performance, such as the prohibition of violence or calls to arms.<sup>77</sup>

Deseriis identifies several examples of "hacktivism" that adhere to this narrative structure. Hacktivism can be loosely defined as political actions or gestures that take place in the digital realm. These actions are usually provocative and incendiary, and could even be considered aggressive or violent. One common manifestation of hacktivism is the virtual sit-in, in which a networked community runs a program that continuously reloads a targeted webpage, exceeding the server's bandwidth and crashing the site.<sup>78</sup> The net.art collective eToy is a powerful example of the capability of hacktivism to affect real life. eToy was a collective of digital artists working in the 1990s. The collective was organized by a corporate structure, and through this incorporation, much of their work critiques capitalist activities in the digital realm on a global scale. In a work known as *Toywar* (1999-2000), eToy, the digital artist collective, was sued by eToys, the corporation, for trademark infringement. In response to legal action by eToys, which temporarily shut down the eToy website, the Toywar platform was launched. After becoming a "toy.soldier" by registering with the Toywar platform, a variety of actions were available to users. The "virtual shopper" software allowed participants to "clog the eToys server with bogus shopping requests."<sup>79</sup> A virtual sit-in was conducted at the height of the Christmas shopping season. Other opportunities for participation included organizing, programming, writing press releases, design work, participation in forums, contacting journalists, composing journalistic work, and compiling knowledge on the "enemy" (eToys).<sup>80</sup> Ultimately, eToy won their battle against eToys and resisted the impending commercialization of the Internet when the

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<sup>77</sup> Bruguera, "Declaration of Principles for Artistic Action," Blog, [www.taniabruquera.com](http://www.taniabruquera.com).

<sup>78</sup> Deseriis, "Online Activism as a Participatory Form of Storytelling," 255.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 258.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

lawsuit against them was dropped.<sup>81</sup> While the political goals of eToy and Tania Bruguera certainly differ, the example of *Toywar* illustrates the impact that online activism can have on real institutions.

However, in the current phase of the Internet, which Deseriis refers to as “Web 2.0,” hacktivism is more oriented towards social media platforms because of the ability to evade censorship and the strength and efficiency of social media’s capacity for dissemination in comparison to traditional mass media.<sup>82</sup> In addition, social media platforms are more accessible to a wider variety of users than the first iteration of hacktivism (of which the eToy collective is an example), which required an extensive knowledge of hacking and code.<sup>83</sup> The example of eToy is illustrative of the value of online activism and its ability to impact the workings of the world. The use of social media in *#YoTambienExijo* becomes all the more significant when considering the historical moment in which the work was executed. Cuba has only recently introduced the Internet and social media into society, and one possible effect of a thawing of relations between the U.S. and Cuba is the installation of fiber optic cables that would allow the island to enter the digital age on a large scale.<sup>84</sup> However, like *Tucumán Arde* and Roberto Plate’s *Baño*, eToy’s tactics are definitively aggressive. In contrast, *#YoTambienExijo* endorses a peaceful form of protest. However, this does not mean that the work is innocuous or ineffectual, an issue that will be explored in the last section of this thesis.

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<sup>81</sup> Deseriis, “Online Activism as a Participatory Form of Storytelling,” 256-58.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 260.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>84</sup> Currently, there are only a few computers provided by the government that are located in a library for public use in Havana. Cubans can purchase WiFi cards from hotels for one hour of use and either use the computers in the hotel lobby (of which there are often only two or three) or obtain laptops through the black market or émigré relatives. At this time, no Cubans are allowed to have Internet access in their homes, although that will change if the détente with the United States carries forward.

## The Issue of Re-Performance

The final aspect of *#YoTambienExijo* that must be explored before an analysis of its significance is conducted is the issue of re-performance. A performance work is never the same when it is repeated. Obviously, this is due to a variety of factors, not restricted to the changing compositions of the audience or participants and physical and historical contexts.<sup>85</sup> However, many works of performance art that are recreated are considered synonymous with their earlier iterations. What makes the performances of *#YoTambienExijo* part of a new and cohesive work instead of a simple re-enactment of *Tatlin's Whisper #6*? As art theorist Amelia Jones has pointed out, the issue of re-performance is far from straightforward or conclusive.<sup>86</sup> However, I will attempt to position the performance element of *#YoTambienExijo* within an art historical framework in order to advocate for its status as a new work of art as opposed to a simple (planned) re-performance. First, a quick look at the dynamics driving *Tatlin's Whisper #6* (2009) is necessary.

*Tatlin's Whisper #6* was modeled after a historic moment from the Cuban Revolution that contributed to the mythology surrounding Fidel Castro as a legendary leader. During Castro's first speech in Havana following the "victory" of the Revolution (armed conflict would actually stretch on for several years), a dove landed on his shoulder and remained there for the duration of his speech. Fidel's speeches to the people of Cuba in the following decades would always take place in the Plaza de la Revolución, usually lasting for several hours. *Tatlin's Whisper #6* places the citizen/speaker in the position of power normally occupied by Fidel, appropriating the

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<sup>85</sup> Amelia Jones and Adrian Heathfield, eds., *Perform, Repeat, Record: Live Art in History* (Chicago: Intellect, 2012), 3.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 15-17.

moment of Castro's historic speech and the ways in which he address his citizens. This was a provocative form of mimicry that undoubtedly contributed to the work's censorship.

One example of a performance that has been recreated is Yoko Ono's *Cut Piece*, originally performed in 1964 in Tokyo and staged again in Paris in 2003 (Figures 22 and 23).<sup>87</sup> Theoretically speaking, the format of the work was the same in both versions: audience members (participants) cut away Ono's clothing until the artist concluded the work. While the context—the specific location and, especially, the historical situation—has changed considerably, the performance was still *Cut Piece*. Exterior elements may have changed, but the format and the materials employed were as consistent with its earlier iterations as possible. Ono sits on a different stage in a different continent, but she is still seated on a stage. The original parameters from the 1960s were respected, and though the outcome and meaning were inevitably altered, the 2003 performance does not deviate significantly from the conventions of the first performance in 1964.<sup>88</sup> In a similar fashion, when Kaprow's Happenings are performed after their original implementation, they are executed as recreations of the original that follow Kaprow's original score as closely as possible.

The reduction and simplification of materials in the performance component of *#YoTambienExijo* led to a new and independent work, but one that directly utilized *Tatlin's Whisper #6* (2009) and adapted its artistic syntax to a new situation. In contrast to *Cut Piece*, the difference in the *character* of the location between *Tatlin's Whisper #6* as performed in 2009 and *Tatlin's Whisper #6* as it was planned to be performed in 2014 reinforces the allocation of the 2014 performances as part of a new work, *#YoTambienExijo*. As opposed to an art institution

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<sup>87</sup> *Cut Piece* was also performed in New York in 1964, but the Tokyo performance is first chronologically.

<sup>88</sup> Jones and Heathfield, *Perform, Repeat, Record*, 363.

operated by the state, *#YoTambienExijo* was intended to take place in a prominent public location with strong political connotations and community ties. In the Cuban context, the setting of the Plaza as the locus of political power on the island moves the work from the constructed (the podium, orange backdrop, and military actors) to the actual. *Tatlin's Whisper #6* as a part of *#YoTambienExijo* was to take place not just on a different stage in a different building, as was the case for Ono's 2003 performance of *Cut Piece*, but a different, unique, and symbolically charged public space that added meaning and political force.

An analogous situation to *#YoTambienExijo* can be found in Marina Abramović's *Seven Easy Pieces* (2005), which incorporated seven performances by famous artists from the past into a unique, cohesive, and original work performed by Abramović.<sup>89</sup> The performances included in *Seven Easy Pieces* are Bruce Nauman's *Body Pressure* (1974), Vito Acconci's *Seed Bed* (1972), Valie Export's *Action Pants: Genital Panic* (1969), Gina Pane's *The Conditioning* (1973), and Joseph Beuys's *How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare* (1969). Significantly, Abramović also included two of her own works as components of *Seven Easy Pieces: Lips of Thomas* (1975) and *Entering the Other Side* (2005). As Amelia Jones states, these performances by Abramović in 2005 are not referred to by their individual titles; rather, they are subsumed under the new work *Seven Easy Pieces*.<sup>90</sup> Although the character of the materials and setting required for *#YoTambienExijo* are not the same as the original performance of *Tatlin's Whisper #6*, it cannot be denied that the later performance directly refers to its antecedent in the artist's oeuvre. However, in the same way as Abramović's own past performances were incorporated into a new work in *Seven Easy Pieces*, *#YoTambienExijo* includes the attempted performance of *Tatlin's Whisper #6* in December of 2014 and the subsequent performances in April of 2015 as

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<sup>89</sup> Jones and Heathfield, *Perform, Repeat, Record*, 17.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*

components of a unique and complex work of art. Additionally, re-performance has its place as a method in Bruguera's practice. As mentioned earlier, Bruguera's first major artwork, *Homenaje á Ana Mendieta*, consisted of the re-staging of works by Ana Mendieta, but in a geographically Cuban context rather than in the United States. Bruguera did not simply re-perform Mendieta's works, but incorporated them into *Homenaje á Ana Mendieta* as a new and unique work of art by Tania Bruguera.

### **The Impact in the Real**

On a superficial level, Bruguera's activity in Cuba during the first eight months of 2015 could be considered successful because she defied the government and, essentially, came out unscathed. Her passport was returned, and she was allowed to leave the country without fear of involuntary exile. One could even say that the simple fact that she stood up to an oppressive government and attempted to give voices to Cuban citizens makes the work successful. However, this evaluation of the work on an *ethical* basis does not appreciate or evaluate *#YoTambienExijo* as a work of *art*. Claire Bishop argued against the use of ethical criteria in evaluating art of this kind, and it is a prominent issue in the critical discourse today. For example, Rick Lowe's *Project Rowhouse* is usually deemed successful because it revitalized a downtrodden community in Houston, Texas, while Theaster Gates is sometimes spoken of negatively because he exhibits his community-based projects in museums and galleries, even though the premise of his works are similar to Lowe's.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Larne Abse Gogarty, "Art and Gentrification," *Art Monthly*, February 2014: 7-10.

In her well-known response to Nicolas Bourriaud's *Relational Aesthetics*, Bishop aligns art that leads to discussion, and even friction or conflict, with the political.<sup>92</sup> It is a necessary trait of democracy to have this discussion and friction, because productive participation and debate are the only ways to make progress towards a better society for everyone. Thus, Bishop asserts that politically oriented artwork must inspire dispute or conversation in its audience, but cautions that it must not take a side in the conflict or attempt to sway its participants.<sup>93</sup> To affect participation, reception, and discussion in this manner reduces art to simple political propaganda. *#YoTambienExijo* literally creates a space for discussion in its various formats, whether that space is a soapbox, a platform, or a Tweet. Further, Bruguera does not prohibit voices that advocate for political views other than her own. The Revolution and Cuban politics are extremely complex and nuanced, and *#YoTambienExijo* allows for this complexity to be explored by its participants.

Bruguera opened up *#YoTambienExijo* to include the wider Cuban diaspora and other citizens in the world through the performances of April 2015 and social media platforms. The Cuban diaspora participated in another one of Bruguera's works, *Memoria de la Postguerra I* (Postwar Memory I, 1993, Figure 24). This work appropriates the format of *La Granma*, the only legal newspaper in Cuba, which is written and distributed by the state. However, instead of the propagandistic fluff that fills the pages of *Granma*, *Memoria de la Postguerra* includes essays, poems, and fake advertisements created by various Cuban cultural figures, including Bruguera herself. Significantly, she included people from both sides of the "border," those in Cuba and those who had emigrated. This breakdown of boundaries between Cubans and *gusanos* is

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<sup>92</sup> Bishop, "Antagonism," 51-79.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, 51-79.

significant because of the latter's exclusion from the historical narrative.<sup>94</sup> Further, *Memoria* was circulated in artistic circles, forming an underground network of information and an alternative story to the official account of history.

Returning to *#YoTambienExijo*, this assertion of opinions that conflict with the Cuban government's authoritative history should be considered one successful outcome of Bruguera's work. As mentioned in the brief summarization of the Cuban Revolution and the Special Period, the thawing of relations with the United States is a substantial rupture in the historical trajectory of the island. One of the terms that Bruguera often uses to describe her work is "political timing specific," which is defined by the artist as "a work method in which the piece is linked to and depends [on] the political circumstances existing in the moment it is made or exhibited."<sup>95</sup> Thus, the work gains some of its strength from the historical context in which it was conducted, while simultaneously participating in the writing of that historical context. Additionally, with the return of Bruguera's passport, the specific political moment is ended, concluding the work. Recalling *Baño* and *Tucumán Arde*, *#YoTambienExijo* combined the voices of citizens with an alternative narrative that revealed the falsity of official doctrine to an international audience. To put it simply, what is false about official doctrine is the role of the government as an honest and supportive administration that cares about the equality and wellbeing of all of its citizens. Through its provocation, *#YoTambienExijo* effectively exposed the contradictions between the narratives and rhetoric of the Cuban state proclaiming equality and promising utopia and the lived reality of censorship and oppression as well as the possible exploitation of the people for pecuniary gain with the introduction of capitalist forces to Cuba's economy.

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<sup>94</sup> *Gusanos* translates to "worms," and is the term used by Revolutionary dogma to describe emigrants who are automatically perceived as counter-revolutionaries.

<sup>95</sup> Bruguera, "Political Timing Specific," Glossary, [www.taniabruquera.com](http://www.taniabruquera.com).

## Conclusion

*#YoTambienExijo*'s must be seen as a distinct and unique work of art in its own right. If it is not, a significant case of the political power of art is ignored. Based on Claire Bishop's notion of authorship and Bruguera's concept of political specific timing, the directional role of the artist in establishing parameters here produced a participatory form of activism. The examples of *Tucumán Arde* and Roberto Plate's *Baño* place this politically oriented and participatory artwork in an art historical and Latin American tradition. I have also argued for the inclusion of social media activity as a mode of participation, both in art and in politics. Finally, utilizing Ono's *Cut Piece* and Abromvić's *Seven Easy Pieces*, I have attempted to illustrate that the performance element of *#YoTambienExijo* departs from *Tatlin's Whisper #6* through the significant shifts in material, physical space, and political context. I have explored the ways in which *#YoTambienExijo* opened a space for discussion in an environment of censorship and revealed the contradictions of Cuban historical and political rhetoric to an international audience by providing an alternative during a major political and economic transition in Cuba's history.

## Appendix A

Tania Bruguera, "Open Letter to the Heads of State," December 17, 2014  
[www.taniabruquera.com](http://www.taniabruquera.com)

Dear Raúl, querido Obama, dear Pope Francis,

First let me offer congratulations, because politicians are expected to make history and today, December 17th, 2014, has been a historic day.

You have made history by proposing that the embargo/blockade become empty words. With the restoration of diplomatic relations, you have transformed the meaning of fifty-three years of policies defined by one side (the United States) and used by the other (Cuba) to ideologically guide the daily lives of Cubans everywhere. I wonder if this gesture is not also a proposal to kill ideology itself? Cuba is finally seeing itself, not from the perspective of death, but of life. But, I wonder, what will that life be and who will have the right to that new life?

Very well then, Raúl:

As a Cuban, today I call for the right to know what is being planned with our lives and, as part of this new phase, for the establishment of a politically transparent process in which we will all be able to participate, and to have the right to hold different opinions without punishment. When it comes time to reconsider what has defined who we are, that it not include the same intolerance and indifference which has so far accompanied changes in Cuba-a process in which acquiescence is the only option.

As a Cuban, today I demand there be no more privileges or social inequalities. The Cuban Revolution distributed privileges to those in government or deemed trustworthy (read: loyal) by the government. This has not changed. Privilege created the social inequalities under which we have always lived, inequalities which were then rationalized as a revolutionary meritocracy and are now being transformed into a reliable entrepreneurial class. I demand that the emotional and tangible rights of those who cannot participate in this new phase-those at the bottom-be protected.

As a Cuban, today I demand that we not be defined by the financial markets nor by how useful we can be to government. I call for equality for the Cuban who, due to the blockade/embargo, spent his life working in a factory only to come home a proud worker's hero but now has no place in a world of foreign investments and can only hope to receive a pension defined by the standards of socialist times, not by today's market economy. What is the plan, Raul, to avoid the same mistakes made by the countries from the former socialist camp? To avoid returning to the Cuba of 1958? How do we repair the emotional abuse the Cuban people have endured through the politics of recent years? How do we ensure there is social and material justice? How do we guarantee we will not become a colony, that we won't have to accept our new providers without question-as happened first with the Soviet Union and then with Venezuela?

As a Cuban, today I call for the right of peaceful protest in the streets to support or denounce any government decision without fear of reprisal. I call for the legal right to establish associations and political parties with platforms that differ from that of the ruling party. I call for the decriminalization of civic activism, civil society, and of those with different points of view. I demand that the legitimacy of political parties born of the popular will be recognized. I call for direct elections in which all political parties are allowed to participate, and for ideological discrepancies to be resolved with debate and not via acts of repudiation.

As a Cuban, today I demand the right to be a political being-not merely an economic entities or symbolic exchange to make history.

As a Cuban, Raúl, today I want to know the vision for the nation we are building.

As an artist, Raul, I propose you today to exhibit "Tatlin's Whisper #6" at the Plaza de la Revolución (Revolution Square). Let's open the microphones and let all voices be heard. Let's not offer just the clatter of coins to fulfill our lives. Let's turn on the microphones. Let's learn together to make something of our dreams.

Today I'd like to I propose that Cubans take to the streets wherever they may be on December 30th to celebrate, not the end of a blockade/embargo, but the beginning of our civil rights.

Let's make sure it's the Cuban people who will benefit from this new historic moment. Our homeland is what hurts us.

Tania Bruguera  
Vatican City, December 17, 2014

## Appendix B

Tania Bruguera, "Declaration of Principles for Artistic Action," December 25, 2014.  
[www.taniabruquera.com](http://www.taniabruquera.com)

Given the fact that art leads to multiple interpretations.

Given the diversity of views that are summoned there and the passion with which Cubans defend our ideas.

Given the fact that we have received proposals Cubans around the world who also want to speak from their Plaza.

Given the peaceful nature of the #YoTambienExijo platform that promotes the meeting of the 30th of December.

We want to provide access to instructions, so that this work may be performed with us in Havana, or elsewhere.

### **Ten instructions to activate the work "Tatlin's Whisper# 6"**

(Note: Before starting the work a person explains the rules to all present)

1. The microphone is open for anyone who wants to use it.
2. Each person has a minute to speak whereupon should leave the microphone to those who follow and respect the right of others to express themselves on equal terms.
3. Each group to perform this piece can choose in what way they will indicate that the intervention time is over. We suggest: clapping, finger snaps, a buzzer alarm sound, a musical instrument.
4. The main rule of this work is that ALL reviews are welcome and the audience may NOT stop the intervention. If someone disagrees can use its minute at the microphone to offer a different opinion.
5. Each person involved in the performance will speak from his/her point of view. No spokespersons or alternative institutions or government groups will be accepted. It is a public but individual action.
6. Vulgarity, swearword, curse, calls to violence, discrimination or affronts to the integrity of individuals, shall not be accepted.
7. Not illegal acts or violent actions against public order are accepted.

8. The length of the work is up to the public. In the event the work spans for several hours and recurrent ideas were detected, the audience can resolve to establish a new 'open mic' to talk about a specific topic. Whenever a new group starts, the rules will be explained again.

9. The order of speakers will be determined by the order in which the word is requested. The order of speakers should be respected.

10. The work is an Art Space where we all can design our desires and our human imaginaries.

#YoTambienExijo

## Appendix C

Transcript of *Tatlin's Whisper #6*, 2009  
www.taniabruquera.com

Guillermo Gómez Peña: We are about to present two performances simultaneously: Tania's work in this courtyard. Three hundred disposable cameras will be handed out so, very frugally and strategically, you may take your pictures with a flash of the people who will have a minute in the podium to talk freely of whatever they want. Thank you very much for being with us and for your patience.

2. Cuba is a country surrounded by the sea and it is also an island walled in by censorship. Internet and especially the blogs have opened some cracks on the wall of information control. The phenomenon of the alternative blogosphere has been growing and a large part of the Cuban population is now aware of its existence. We are a few bloggers yet, but our sites contribute to awaken civic opinion. Authorities consider new technologies are a "wild stallion" that must be tamed, but independent bloggers want them to run freely. Difficulties to spread our sites are many. Hand to hand and thanks to flash memories, CDs and the obsolete floppies, the contents of the blogs covers the entire island. Internet is becoming a public debate square where we Cubans write our opinions. The real island is becoming a virtual island, more democratic and plural. Unfortunately, those free opinion winds in the net have barely blown on our guarded reality. We should not continue waiting to be granted authorization to enter Internet, to have a blog or to write an opinion. It is time to jump over the control wall.

3. That there is a day when we all have some minutes to say into a mike all we want and, also, that those with this possibility devote a minute at least to say the truth.

4. The worst about our problems is not how serious they are, but the lack of perspective to solve them. I do not dare suggest even one solution, but I think that the path towards these solutions is to put mikes at the disposal of all those with an idea in their heads. For these mikes to multiply and have a larger audience, it is necessary first of all to decriminalize the exercise of dissenting opinions. The day when the decriminalization of political discrepancy is clearly announced in this country we will witness a transcendental event. Economic, political, social, cultural and many other projects now hidden into numerous drawers because of the fear of being misunderstood will come to light. Projects by serious, professional, honest, intelligent and informed people who, because they respect the law and love their families, have not wanted to suffer the penalties we all know about. An additional advantage will be the decrease in simulation and there will be less reason for opportunism.

5. I want to talk against surreptitious militarization in Cuba. I am against it and want to speak out against all the things that upset me day by day. I am against and I protest and I express it. I am against people staying on that side without taking the chance to jump to this side, not even today. I am against it.

6. That one day freedom of expression in Cuba will not be a performance.

7. Hey, I have a mike just like this one. I wanted to say that a very serious thing has happened. State security confiscated some papers of mine and has not returned them yet. They said they were going to confiscate them. They took my flash memory and erased everything I had in it. These were pictures I wanted to publish and things like that. I need the paper to be returned to me, because it is mine. That's all. If I think up something else I'll come up again, after all, nobody is coming up.

8. The only thing I want to say is that they should come up and talk here. Come up and talk. Come up and talk. That they do not cut into phone calls. That they let you do what you want. Long live democracy! We hope some day it will prevail in Cuba.

9. I only want to say that the chance to come up here feels really nice. Those who have not come up, please do although your ideas may not be too clear. It feels very, very nice. It is a step forward. Please, come up.

10. It is said that in a meeting with intellectuals, Virgilio Pinera once answered: "I only know that I'm afraid." Me too.

11. I am a wounded man and would like to go away and reach that place where men that are alone with themselves are heard. I only have pride, goodness, and I feel an exile in the midst of men.

12. Revolution is to change everything that should be changed.

13. I would like to have all those here vote to see if we agree on certain aspects. You would only have to raise your hand, all those who want to. Who actually agrees that the Castro family, which is the one that has been monitoring us during these fifty years, should leave power? That they hand it over, that elections of a different type are held in Cuba, that there is talk about the political prisoners, Antunez case, for example. He is in a hunger strike. One of us may have much access to direct information. Well this and so on and so forth. I think that raising our hand here today we may change things right now. Then one, two, three: raise your hands so things change today.

14. I want to quote words by famous artist Joseph Beuys: "Art does not exist, artists do not exist. We are all artists."

15. Reverse a phrase: "With the Revolution, everything; without it, nothing."

16. For the good of every Cuban, I want to listen in self-sound.

17. Well, a very important thing: doves are kind of peculiar as to their meat, but well, I don't know what to say about their feathers. I'm very nervous with this mike here. I don't know what to say. I am talking on behalf my teacher Saavedra, an announcement for this exhibition. There are many people here. I see it is very hot. I could not see the beginning because I bumped into a lot of people. Don't laugh. What else can I say? Nothing. That it is a very beautiful show.

18. One, two, yes. Please, when you come to the podium do not touch the mike, because it captures much signal, noise comes off and you do not hear yourselves. Understood? Leave it as it is. You go near it and say what you want to say.

19. Disappointment is the worst feeling.

20. People, this is a democratic opening, right now in this festival. Freedom, freedom, freedom!

21. I don't understand Spanish. Long live change, change!

22. Millions of children are starving. None of them are Cuban.

23. (A different language)

24. I am 20 years old. This is the first time I feel so free. Of course, I invite those older than me, even those who are dead, to come and recite here.

25. I am 20 years old too. I am a theater professor and am very happy that so many peoples can be in this biennial exhibition and that there is unity. I also fight for world peace.

26. Good evening. I am from Puerto Rico. Although my island is a colony, I have had the privilege of having had freedom of expression. I make you an additional suggestion to the one that has been made here tonight: that we stay here for 24 hours defending that this mike is kept open. Especially that all foreigners who can defend this free forum for 24 hours stay here until tomorrow. Have more Cubans come, come and talk with the dove.

27. Well, I ask please, do not dare hide and much less banish this piece from the media, because it has been too many years trying to hide the sun with a finger.

28. Good evening. I am a Cuban. I am an artist and am working in the Biennial Exhibition. I came some days ago here, to the Lam, to pick up the catalogue the Biennial Exhibition was supposed to give me. They told me the catalogue was only for foreigners. I would like to know why we Cubans do not have the right to a catalogue.

29. This summarizes everything.

30. My name is Marta Toledo. I am a Mexican. I am Juchitepec. I come from a pre-Hispanic culture, a culture based in corn. In Mexico we know that without corn we would have no country. That is why women organized and formed a group called MAMAZ. We have given birth to all of you, fuckers. You know what? They are screwing us in this world. Yes, they are screwing us. There is a woman killed every minute in Ciudad Juarez, in Mexico, in Oaxaca, in Spain. They screw them. They rape them. What will happen to us? We are your mothers, your partners. The future is guaranteed if we, together, join hands. I like it very much to be in this Exhibition and see so many women here. Until a while ago it was only men who controlled the works of art. Yes, it is thus...

31. Freedom is to be found in self-esteem. Please, defend your right to pleasure.

32. Please, a minute of silence for ourselves.

33. Good evening. My name is Lisette Quintana. I graduated from the Visual Arts Academy in Ciego de Avila. As it happens, my dissertation deals with social criticism and that is why I am here. Many things are said about Cuba in the world, but by sheer chance I was walking down Obispo Street some days ago and I saw something very sad. I saw a Cuban child begging. He entered a place and we threw him out. We threw him out with shouts. I would like to know if we speak of children with so much vivacity, with so much pride, why was that child there?

34. I expect you protest. I expect you protest so there is no need to do this. Long live freedom of expression!

35. What is more important, to talk or to do? What is more important, to talk or to do? What is more important, to talk or to do? What is more important, to talk or to do? What is more important, to talk or to do?

36. Hello. If somebody has found my equipment, please, this is the moment to return it. Thank you.

37. A shout.

38. And why do we need a podium to say the truth? Do we simply expect that with our works... Why do we need a podium to say what eats up our soul? Why do we need a podium to say the truth?

39. I think this should be banned.

40. Thank you very much, Cubans.

## Figures



Figure 1

Tania Bruguera, *Homenaje á Ana Mendieta* (Homage to Ana Mendieta), performance, Centro de Desarrollo de las Artes Visuales, Havana, Cuba, 1993

Photo: Gonzalo Vidal Alvarado

Reproduced from <http://www.taniabruquera.com/cms/495-0-Tribute+to+Ana+Mendieta.htm>



Figure 2

Tania Bruguera, *Homenaje á Ana Mendieta* (Homage to Ana Mendieta), performance, Centro de Desarrollo de las Artes Visuales, Havana, Cuba, 1993

Photo: Gonzalo Vidal Alvarado

Reproduced from <http://www.taniabruquera.com/cms/495-0-Tribute+to+Ana+Mendieta.htm>

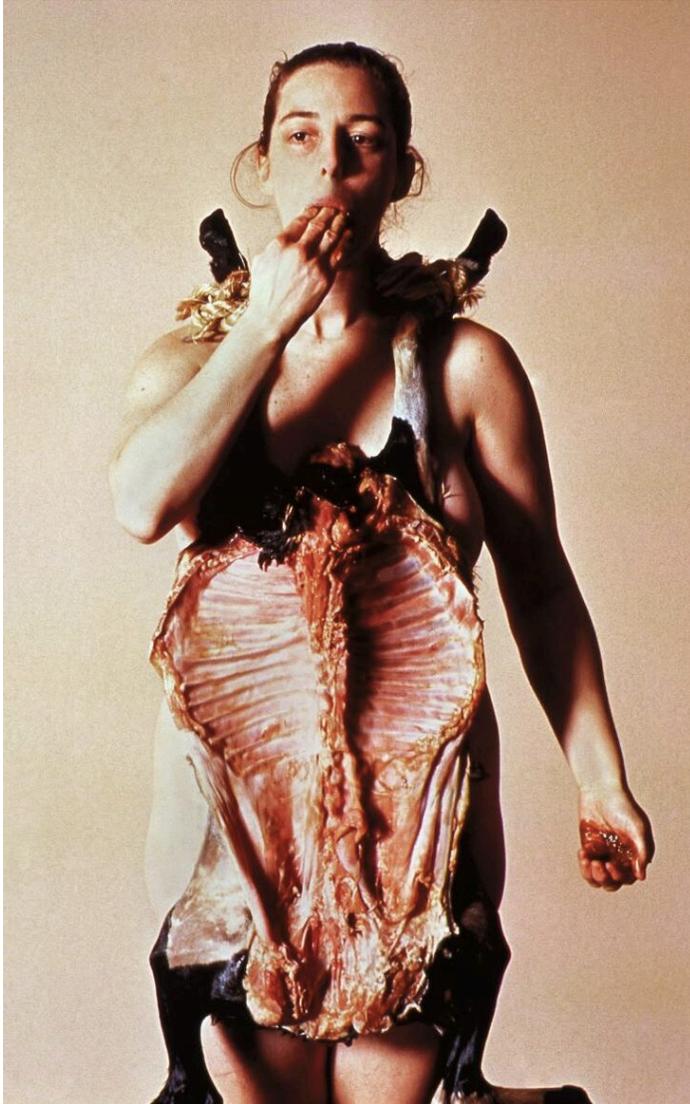


Figure 3  
Tania Bruguera, *El Peso de La Culpa* (The Burden of Guilt), performance, Havana, 1997  
Decapitated lamb, rope, water, salt, and Cuban soil  
Reproduced from <http://www.artesmagazine.com/2010/03/neuberger-museum-features-installation-art-by-cuban-artist/>



Figure 4  
Tania Bruguera, *Càtedra Arte Conducta* (Behavior Art School), Tania Bruguera and students, Havana, 2002-2009  
Reproduced from <http://www.taniabruquera.com/cms/492-0-Ctedra+Arte+de+Conducta+Behavior+Art+School.htm>



Figure 5  
Tania Bruguera, *Càtedra Arte Conducta* (Behavior Art School), Claire Bishop and students in 2007, Havana, 2002-2009  
Reproduced from <http://www.taniabruquera.com/cms/492-0-Ctedra+Arte+de+Conducta+Behavior+Art+School.htm>



Figure 6  
Tania Bruguera, *Càtedra Arte Conducta* (Behavior Art School), Nicolas Bourriaud and students  
in 2007, Havana, 2002-2009  
Reproduced from <http://www.taniabruquera.com/cms/492-0-Ctedra+Arte+de+Conducta+Behavior+Art+School.htm>



Figure 7  
Tania Bruguera, *Immigration Movement International* (Plant Justice), Queens, New York, 2010-  
2015  
Reproduced from <http://immigrant-movement.us/wordpress/images/>



Figure 8

Tania Bruguera, *Tatlin's Whisper #6*, performance, Central Patio of the Wifredo Lam Center, Havana, 2009

Stage, podium, microphones, two loudspeakers, two actors in military costume, white dove, two hundred disposable cameras with flash.

Photo: Audience member

Reproduced from <http://www.taniabruquera.com/cms/112-0-Tatlins+Whisper+6+Havana+version.htm>



Figure 9

Tania Bruguera, *Tatlin's Whisper #6*, performance, Central Patio of the Wifredo Lam Center, Havana, 2009

Stage, podium, microphones, two loudspeakers, two actors in military costume, white dove, two hundred disposable cameras with flash.

Photo: Audience member

Reproduced from <http://www.taniabruquera.com/cms/112-0-Tatlins+Whisper+6+Havana+version.htm>



Figure 10

Tania Bruguera, *Tatlin's Whisper #6*, performance, Central Patio of the Wifredo Lam Center, Havana, 2009

Stage, podium, microphones, two loudspeakers, two actors in military costume, white dove, two hundred disposable cameras with flash.

Photo: Audience member

Reproduced from <http://www.taniabruquera.com/cms/112-0-Tatlin's+Whisper+6+Havana+version.htm>



Figure 11

Tania Bruguera, *Tatlin's Whisper #6*, performance, Central Patio of the Wifredo Lam Center, Havana, 2009

Stage, podium, microphones, two loudspeakers, two actors in military costume, white dove, two hundred disposable cameras with flash.

Photo: Audience member

Reproduced from <http://www.taniabruquera.com/cms/112-0-Tatlin's+Whisper+6+Havana+version.htm>



Figure 12

Castro speaking on the night of his arrival in Havana after winning the Revolution, Ciudad Libertad, Havana, January 8, 1959

Photo: Tor Eigeland

Reproduced from <http://www.taniabruquera.com/cms/112-0-Tatlins+Whisper+6+Havana+version.htm>



Figure 13

Castro speaking on the night of his arrival in Havana after winning the Revolution, Ciudad Libertad, Havana, January 8, 1959

Photo: Tor Eigeland

Reproduced from <http://www.taniabruquera.com/cms/112-0-Tatlins+Whisper+6+Havana+version.htm>



Figure 14

Tania Bruguera, *#YoTambienExijo*, performance, Torre de Libertad, Miami, Florida, 2015

Photo: Pedro Portal for el Nuevo Herald

Reproduced from <http://www.elnuevoherald.com/noticias/sur-de-la-florida/article5191899.html>



Figure 15

Tania Bruguera, *#YoTambienExijo*, performance, Times Square, New York, 2015

Photo: Jillian Steinhauer for *Hyperallergic*

Reproduced from <http://hyperallergic.com/198731/at-the-crossroads-of-the-world-a-dissident-cuban-artist-is-almost-heard/>



Figure 16  
Jeremy Deller, *Battle of Orgreave*, performance, Orgreave, 2001  
Reproduced from [http://www.jeremydeller.org/TheBattleOfOrgreave/TheBattleOfOrgreave\\_Video.php](http://www.jeremydeller.org/TheBattleOfOrgreave/TheBattleOfOrgreave_Video.php)



Figure 17  
Jeremy Deller, *Battle of Orgreave*, performance, Orgreave, 2001  
Reproduced from [http://www.jeremydeller.org/TheBattleOfOrgreave/TheBattleOfOrgreave\\_Video.php](http://www.jeremydeller.org/TheBattleOfOrgreave/TheBattleOfOrgreave_Video.php)



Figure 18  
Santiago Sierra, *133 Persons Paid to Have Their Hair Dyed Blonde*, Venice, 2001  
Reproduced from <http://www.xcult.ch/medientheorie/06-ausstellungen/07-sierra2.html>



Figure 19  
Santiago Sierra, *133 Persons Paid to Have Their Hair Dyed Blonde*, Venice, 2001  
Reproduced from <http://li-mac.org/collection/limac-collection/santiago-sierra/works/133-persons-paid-to-have-their-hair-dyed-blond/>



Figure 20  
Poster advertising *Tucumán Arde*, Rosario, Argentina, 1968  
Reproduced from <http://www.macba.cat/en/arxiu-tucuman-arde-documentacio-relativa-a-les-diverses-accions-i-treballs-realitzats-per-aquest-col·lectiu-2789>



Figure 21  
*Tucumán Arde*, Entrance with banner reading "Visit Tucumán: Garden of Misery," Argentina, 1968  
Reproduced from [http://www.macba.cat/uploads/20120611/2789e\\_770x541.jpg](http://www.macba.cat/uploads/20120611/2789e_770x541.jpg)



Figure 22  
Yoko Ono, *Cut Piece*, performance, Yamaichi Concert Hall, Tokyo, Japan, 1964  
Courtesy Lenono Photo Archive. Photographer unknown.  
Reproduced from <http://www.phaidon.com/agenda/art/articles/2015/may/18/yoko-ono-s-cut-piece-explained/>



Figure 23  
Yoko Ono, *Cut Piece*, performance, Theatre Le Ranelagh, Paris, France, 2003  
Courtesy Lenono Photo Archive. Photo: Ken McKay  
Reproduced from <http://imaginepeace.com/archives/2680>



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## Vita

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## Abstract

Tania Bruguera gained much attention in the press in 2015 for her artistic activity in Cuba following the thawing of relations with the United States. While much of the critical discourse has focused on the *Hannah Arendt International Institute of Activism*, her project *#YoTambienExijo* has not been satisfactorily approached as a work of art in its own right. After composing a letter to Barack Obama, Fidel Castro, and the Pope, Bruguera intended to perform her work *Tatlin's Whisper #6* (originally staged in 2009) in the Plaza de Revolución. For this performance, each participant is given one minute to speak freely and be heard. This is a significant action in Cuba, where there is no freedom of speech. However, she was denied the permit to publicly assemble and was arrested after attempting to stage the performance anyways. The social media platform *#YoTambienExijo* was launched in conjunction with this attempted performance, a phrase (which translates to "I also demand") that was taken from Bruguera's letter. Following Bruguera's initial arrest, she was marked as a dissident by the government and was subsequently followed, interrogated, and harassed by police and government officials. In April of 2015, various art institutions in the United States and Europe staged performances of *Tatlin's Whisper #6*. *#YoTambienExijo* ends with the return of Bruguera's passport, a designation supported by Bruguera's concept of political specific timing.

I assert that the attempted performance by Bruguera in Cuba, the social media activity tied to the platform *#YoTambienExijo*, and the numerous performances in April of 2015 constitute a distinct and unique work of art as opposed to a simple re-performance of *Tatlin's Whisper #6*. The directorial role of the artist in socially oriented, participatory art is examined in the context of *#YoTambienExijo*. After placing *#YoTambienExijo* in an art historical framework, I conclude by discussing the significance of the piece as a powerful political and artistic action.

*#YoTambienExijo* not only opened a space for discussion in the midst of censorship, but it also exposed the contradictions between idealistic socialist rhetoric and allowed Cubans to provide an alternative voice in the historical narrative of their country.