

cuba ABSOLUTELY *With a passion for Cuba***Michelangelo Pistoletto at the 12th Havana Biennial**

Finally. That indisputably mythical figure of the visual arts in the second half of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first century, Michelangelo Pistoletto, has arrived in Havana. As soon as I learned of his imminent presence in Cuba, the first thing that came to mind was something he said that has always greatly impressed me. In fact it has helped me to understand various phenomena in contemporary art. A “thing” is not art: but the idea expressed by the same “thing” may be. In those few words, we can summarize the clarity of this man’s vision of a future full of processes that are as complex and changeable as art.

Pistoletto has reached us with a phase of his work that has been in progress since 2003, *The Third Paradise*, which is based on a symbol he created and called the “New Infinity Sign” that is represented by a reconfiguration of the mathematical infinity sign. With this, the artist proposes a responsible social transformation concept, a grand proposition coalescing art, science, economy, spirituality and politics into one single idea. In this regard, the artist has stated: “I do not wish to prophesy a future impregnated with metaphysical hopes, but a transformation that involves all the spheres of life.”

I believe that his arrival in Cuba coincides with times that are undergoing sensitive transformations. Therefore his presence here and the strength of his idea, which carries the spirit and the wish to change things, can be

interpreted as a very good omen. People who were at his performance on May 23 in Cathedral Square in Havana commented that they were left with a feeling of having been renewed, as if somehow hope had grown.

But these actions by the Italian artist from Turin do not only impress for the content of the extraordinary messages being transmitted; they also impress because of the expansion of forms, for the beauty they generate in terms of colors and structures, and also for the intensity brought to them by the people. For this project, the choice of location seems to be one of the basic concerns. It becomes a kind of essential mirror reflecting every single intention.

For me, the thing that has the most impact on me is that this infinity symbol, which in every presentation becomes the protagonist in the performance, has the ability to adapt to the substances or objects that have been chosen to represent it. Its new face is incarnated in extraordinary equilibrium, leaving the gift of images having great visual power.

Interestingly, at the end of 2014, Pistoletto's work had an important connection with Cuba, although without the presence of the artist. The date was December 16, the day prior to the announcement of Cuba-US renewal of diplomatic relations. For the first time in Cuba, off Havana's coast, the Third Paradise symbol made its appearance, recreated with small and medium-sized boats constantly moving in the sea, reaching unprecedented proportions.

I have always thought that the existence of good documentation preparing the viewer prior to having to deal with the unknown territory of a performance can become an element to be considered for its subsequent success.

In this regard, Pistoletto's performance in Havana had this desired documentation, which was made available to the public at the Fototeca de Cuba in Plaza Vieja. On the top floor of the institution, an exhibition was set up with posters documenting the project's trajectory all over the world and through the regions of Italy. A model of the symbol was on display, made up of the various cymbals used by children in different performances. In this way, witnessing the execution of the piece turned into immediate nostalgia.

The cobblestones of Cathedral Square were certainly reverberating with energy, with an intangible force that doesn't resign itself to being still and goes on to found intentions and insert them where they become vital. The Third Paradise sign was again formed with cymbals and this time they were played by musicians, populating its structure with sound. The following day, Pistoletto made a presentation at the Iglesia de Paula Church with the performance of "Thirteen Less Two" in collaboration with the Arc Longa Early Music Ensemble, based on a composition by Luis Alberto Mariño. At the end of the musical performance, the artist began to smash a number of large mirrors with a club, leaving a stunned Cuban audience.

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