

## APARTMENT



Foto; Tania Bruguera

This type of long-term project has its own inner demands to maintain its organic balance and it is evident I have to set myself certain rules, certain restrictions, because a year seems to be too much time for a residence, but it is not time enough for a social and political project and I must even up this disparity a little on the basis of the form in which I structure my work.

There are evident things. For example, when I came to Queens to look for an apartment, I felt none of them suited me. I didn't feel comfortable in any of them and this surprised me very much because I have never been demanding with the space I live in, partly because I am never home (my mother always says that for me a house is like a hotel). When I came back from that trip, I noticed that what was not working was that the way to apprehend the situations of the immigrants was not only through the stories I would hear, but through my own experiences. Well, this project began based on the things I have experienced as an immigrant. So I wrote Jose (Serrano) who works as a community organizer in the Queens museum and is going to be my liaison with the community organizations in the neighborhood. He is there and offered to help me in the process of search. I told him I wanted to find a center to receive the immigrants in Queens. The idea is to begin the piece from the moment they enter in the United States. He looked with some of the associations and did not find any reception center or "shelter" for recently arrived immigrants. I then suggested him to find a room in an apartment where other immigrants lived, since I know this is something very frequent. The way we found the apartment was so simple: he took the data of the rooms to rent near the place where the Headquarters of the project will be. I am interested in living nearby to be available 24/7. He saw several of them and chose an apartment where there were children, since he thought it was a less vulnerable place for me. I know some friends are worried because of the potential criminality index there might be in this neighborhood. I understand the concern, but there are two important things in the project: first: it will be a space on and about vulnerability and, second, I cannot be afraid and can have no prejudices on this place. If I am afraid, it is better that I cancel the project now, before I begin it. I must be open. I must leave the place and the people reveal their complexities and freely define themselves.

- *Tania Bruguera, Havana, January 2011, before the project starts*