

POLITICAL TIMING

By Tania Bruguera

Being a political artist is functioning in the political timing of things. But art seems to always be running after the events to catch up in a sort of reacting manner. As valid as this may be for some, it brings up some ontological problems in terms of the relationship between art and politics.

The first would be that the ability to be in sync with what is political and what is politically happening makes you trustworthy to the people relating with your project (at any point in time and from any distance.)

Also that what is generated as a reaction to something which has already happened and that, moreover, was already defined by politicians, locks away the artist at an archaic position of a difficult passivity, even when its intention is to be analytical and critical. Being an observer is closer to be resentful than to be creative.

Creating knowledge from a data source (whether from the news, books, lectures, etc.) already delivered as a result of several filters of information's manipulation makes it harder to go beyond the representational. It is working with already censored information, which makes extremely hard to find intentions and *realpolitik*.

Political art is uncomfortable whether made by a commentator or by a generator of what is political. It is so because it is generating knowledge in the process of formation and it calls for responsibility. Political art is uncomfortable because the luxury of indifference is not allowed to it. Political art is inopportune because policymakers are in their own timing zone and have their own long-term plan. And artists are very much blamed and guilt-tripped with the consequences of the disruption on the overall plan, even when this may be only a possibility.

It is uncomfortable and inopportune but it is necessary.

An artwork with political aspirations that is conceived and/or arrives at the wrong time makes the existence of what constitutes the political within almost non-existent. Arriving at the wrong time generates an expiration date of what works as the political within from the moment it is conceived, whether coming from an emotional or a pragmatic place.

It is a question of catching up or leading the way.

Working with what is social has to do with understanding what your position is regarding chaos. Working with what is political has to do with understanding what the future is.

Art can't be solely a mental state or an emotional decision. Art is beyond guaranties.