

## To Claudia Cadelo and Christoph Schlingensief



"That one day freedom of expression in Cuba will not be a performance" is something Claudia Cadelo said in 2009 when she stood for a second time before the microphone to activate the piece *Tatlin's Whisper # 6 (Havana version)*. With the accuracy that honesty gives, not only did it summarize in one sentence the collective desire that through art was being channeled, but it stripped the work. It showed the limits of what was happening there (the cathartic satisfaction that we could have had); it examined the dissatisfaction that freedom can have when it's an illusion and it put a challenge to art as a civic space.

That one phrase stuck around with me for a long time, for five years. Every time it was this piece's turn in presentations of my work, of the 40 minutes that it took for its documentation, I would always choose the moment at 4:29 min perhaps not to forget with that phrase the challenge that I had as an artist.

When I have to explain what I mean by *Arte de Conducta* I use the example of "Please Love Austria," a work of Christoph Schlingensief. This work consisted of installing in an Austrian public square, some containers which held several "illegal" immigrants. The daily life of these persons was broadcasted live as a reality show that the artist orchestrated for a week. It was chosen by popular vote, those immigrants the public wanted out of the show, knowing that this meant their immediate deportation from the country.

From the audience's reaction this work showed, in a much clearer than any politician could have done, the state of public opinion of the country with regard to the issue of immigration. It uncovered, with the attitudes and behavior of those who arrived there, what people thought beyond political correctness. With the public's response the human aspect took the space of the political.

Many thought that the work was part of a Theatre Festival (hence 'illegal' immigrants were actually actors). Only later it was understood that this artistic operation needed to be of a fierce realism in order to expose a brutally honest reaction. With this work the artist reacted to the rise to political power for the first time after the Second World War, a political party of the far right, neo-fascist and xenophobic in Austria.

Today I dedicate to Claudia Cadelo and Christoph Schlingensief my intention to put a microphone in Havana's Revolution Square.

Tania Bruguera  
Havana, March 7, 2015