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REVIEW

Aesthetics of resistance: hashtags and Cuban activism

Estéticas de resistencia: hashtag y activismo cubano

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ABSTRACT

Growing tensions between the independent art scene and cultural institutions in Cuba, intensified by censorship and widespread access to the Internet, have given rise to new forms of digital resistance. This paper analyzes Cuban artivism through the hashtags #00BienalDeLaHabana (2017-2018) and #NoALaBienalDeLaHabana (2021-2022), with the aim of examining how these campaigns shape critical discourses and produce new forms of aesthetic and political expression. The analysis of 300 Instagram posts associated with both hashtags allowed us to observe how digital artivism has redefined the modes of circulation of countercultural art and reorganized the Cuban cultural field. As Lev Manovich argues, technologies and platforms not only change the tools of creation, but also the epistemological structures from which we think and relate to image, authorship, and visual culture. Using a historical-critical approach combined with digital methods, the research traces a cartography of dissent, identifies visual patterns, and maps transnational networks. This paper proposes a situated reading of Cuban digital artivism as a practice of resistance that reactivates the languages of contemporary art and activism. Following Jacques Rancière, it argues that hashtags not only communicate, but also suspend ordinary sensory experience by challenging the hierarchies between seeing, saying, and acting. Despite the ephemeral nature of hashtags, they are powerful tools for questioning ossified institutional structures and opening up interstitial spaces in authoritarian contexts.

Keywords: Hashtags**;** Cuban Artivism**;** Social Media**;** Instagram**;** Resistance.

RESUMEN

Las crecientes tensiones entre el campo artístico independiente y la institucionalidad cultural en Cuba, intensificadas por la censura y el acceso masivo a Internet, han impulsado nuevas formas de resistencia digital. Este trabajo analiza el activismo cubano a través de los *hashtags* #00BienalDeLaHabana (2017-2018) y #NoALaBienalDeLaHabana (2021-2022), con el objetivo de examinar cómo estas campañas configuran discursos críticos y producen nuevas formas de enunciación estética y política. El análisis de 300 publicaciones en Instagram asociadas a ambos *hashtags* permitió observar cómo el activismo digital ha redefinido los modos de circulación del arte contestatario y reorganizado el campo cultural cubano. Como plantea Lev Manovich, las tecnologías y plataformas no solo varían las herramientas de creación, sino también las estructuras epistemológicas desde las que pensamos y nos relacionamos con la imagen, la autoría y la cultura visual. A partir de un enfoque histórico-crítico combinado con métodos digitales, la investigación traza una cartografía del disenso, identifica patrones visuales y mapea redes transnacionales. La presente ponencia propone una lectura situada del activismo digital cubano como práctica de resistencia que reactualiza los lenguajes del arte y del activismo contemporáneo. Siguiendo a Jacques Rancière, se argumenta que los *hashtags* no solo comunican, sino que suspenden la experiencia sensible ordinaria, al interpelar las jerarquías entre ver, decir y actuar. Pese a la naturaleza efímera del *hashtag*, constituyen potentes herramientas para cuestionar estructuras institucionales anquilosadas y abrir espacios intersticiales en contextos autoritarios.

Palabras clave: Hashtags; Activismo Cubano; Redes Sociales; Instagram; Resistencia.

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INTRODUCTION

The intensification of control and censorship mechanisms by the Cuban state, with decrees such as Decree 349 in 2018, the massification of Internet connectivity since 2015, as well as the exhaustion of the revolutionary project, have led in recent years to unusual ruptures between artivists and the art institution in Cuba, which were evidenced by the *hashtags* #00BienaldeLaHabana and #NoALaBienalDeLaHabana. The gap between what is permitted and what is considered ideological diversionism has gradually narrowed, to the point that the Havana Biennial, the most prominent Cuban event in the field of visual arts, is no longer representative for a considerable number of Cuban artists.

The Havana Biennial, despite its importance for art in the Global South, is closely linked to the official narrative of Cuban art and the hegemonic visual complex created by the revolution. As Mirzoeff points out:[1] "If the prevailing visual regime does not represent us, we must find ways to represent ourselves. A revolution is necessary, not in Marxist terms, but a revolution of vision". This is precisely what Cuban artists and artivists have been doing in recent years: dismantling and even short-circuiting the rhetoric and visuality promoted by the revolution, carrying out, among other actions, protests against the Havana Biennial.

These *hashtags* were an act of dissent from an aesthetic and symbolic point of view, as the boycott—of one of the most important cultural events in the Latin American and Caribbean region and the place par excellence for the legitimization and visibility of Cuban art—demonstrated the artistic community's dissatisfaction with the increase in censorship and repression and the lack of freedom of creation and expression.

The aim of this text is to examine the characteristics and circumstances that have shaped current Cuban artivism. It will address the use of digital technologies as an alternative space for political action in Cuba. The study of the phenomenon was approached from a perspective that focuses on the Havana Biennial. This choice is based not only on the occurrence of artivist actions during the event, but mainly because artivism has taken the symbolic space of the Biennial as a strategic platform to create interstices in the visuality of the revolution.

In methodological terms, the data was obtained using digital techniques developed by Gabriela Sued[2], comprising five stages: selection of the social network, data collection, organization, analysis (of both images and text), and visualization.

Given the research's strong emphasis on visuality, we chose to *scrape* Instagram, as it is the most image-centric of the social networks used by the *hashtags* under study. Data collection was carried out using the *Apify* program and organized in a spreadsheet stored in Google Drive. After downloading, the *Tropy* tool was used to visualize the data as a whole in order to identify patterns. The *captions* were entered into *Voyant Tools* and, using the term presentation function, a table was generated highlighting the main keywords associated with the selected *hashtags*.

DEVELOPMENT

Interstices in the visual complex of the revolution. An approach to Cuban artivism

Openly protesting against the hegemonic visual culture and cultural co-optation policies of the Cuban government is an act of courage on the part of artists, especially those living in the country. Since the triumph of the revolution, homeland, sovereignty, and independence have been equated with the socialist project of the revolution. According to Bobes:[3] "The roots of a political culture marked by belligerent nationalism, intolerance, and political moralization have generated a definition of the nation from a political and ethical standpoint that is always exclusive of others". This has given rise to a principle of unanimity and the marginalization of minorities, especially those marked as dissidents, who have been excluded from legitimate membership in the political community and civil society.

Those who do not fit in with these revolutionary principles are, in Hannah Arendt's terms, classified as stateless, as they have no rights and can therefore be deprived of their liberty and treated unequally. In Arendt's experience, Jews, lacking membership in a nation-state and without legal protection, were deprived of rights that could safeguard them. This situation deprived them of the ability to exist politically, transforming them into individuals or subjects lacking a state.[4]

The depersonalization of the subject in the context of revolutionary discourse hinders the formation of diverse political expression. As a result, any critical inquiry or evaluation of government policies places Cuban citizens in the category of adversaries of the system, thus legitimizing the application of punitive measures, such as the violent acts against members of the San Isidro Movement and the protesters on July 11, 2021.

The Cuban state has created a public sphere characterized by limited dissent, sustained by mechanisms that include the absolute monopoly of state media and control of content through the Ideological Department of the Communist Party of Cuba. Those classified as dissidents are disconnected from sectors of civil society, due to the lack of space in the official media and the constant smear campaigns they suffer in the factual, discursive, and symbolic spheres. These actions are protected by legal norms that criminalize the activities of political dissidents and support repression by the authorities. In other words, dissidents are excluded from the public sphere. "In the public arena, only what is considered appropriate, worthy of being seen and heard, is tolerated, so that the inappropriate automatically becomes a private matter".[5] The private sphere is to be deprived of the essential elements of a true human life, such as being seen and heard by others and having a world of things in common; it lies in the absence of others. The Cuban regime prevents individuals from expressing themselves and interacting freely in the public sphere, in the sphere of the common, and forces them to confine themselves to their private lives or, in extreme cases such as that of the creator Luis Manuel Otero Alcántara, to lose their freedom.

Being labeled a "problematic" artist has entailed serious costs both socially and personally, as it means being exposed to defamation in the state media, facing physical aggression, and detention. The application of the concept of intellectual genocide, understood as a crime against humanity that undermines the freedom of expression of an individual or group, is relevant when

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artists are vilified in the national media and accused of activities such as espionage or collaboration with the United States.[6] This accusation, in the context of the revolutionary ethos, leads to being branded a dissident or a traitor to the homeland.

Extremism in the area of culture was evident in decrees such as Decree 349, censorship, harassment, and the imprisonment of artists and managers. The current Cuban artivism scene is marked by strict control of cultural institutions, artists distancing themselves from these institutions, and creators' more direct and stark criticism of the government and its structures, both in public spaces and on social media.

The artivist's stance is to take their art beyond the pristine cube of the gallery, to transcend the exhibition space, to forge links and accompany social movements and causes through politically committed art that functions as a social tool. Tania Bruguera said: "Artivism is the demand for interference in reality, the demand for social change that artists can make through art".[7] Artivism transcends the concept of being a short-term project or the creation of a specific political work; instead, it involves reflecting on the totality of our existence and how we live it.[1] For this reason, Cuban artivists such as Bruguera and the members of the San Isidro Movement have been persecuted, imprisoned, and even exiled because they have repeatedly resorted, despite threats, to artistic actions considered dissident or rebellious.

One thing that sets the San Isidro Movement apart from other politically uncomfortable artistic initiatives (such as Los Aldeanos and La Joven Cuba), in addition to establishing partnerships with other groups such as Ovni Zona Franca and INSTAR (Hannah Arendt International Institute of Activism), is that it has managed to mobilize a significant number of cultural actors. This can be seen in the protest on November 27, 2020 (27N) in front of the Cuban Ministry of Culture and the aforementioned *hashtags*. The actions of the San Isidro Movement did not remain in the micro sphere, but have achieved greater reach thanks to the use of social media to convene, connect with new participants, generate public debate, and make their actions visible and documented.

Political, social, and cultural [r]evolution in Cuba with the arrival of the Internet. A new scope for Cuban artivism

The Cuban context has undoubtedly undergone remarkable changes with the advent of the digital age, especially with mass access to the Internet on the island. Despite infrastructure restrictions and the high associated cost, connectivity has led to the emergence of alternative sources of information and has opened up a space for discussion and the exchange of information on public issues. It has also enabled the interconnection of individuals linked to the political opposition, bloggers, activists, and independent journalists, establishing links with media outlets and political actors beyond the national territory. For Geoffray et al.[8], the media landscape in Cuba evolved from a model of absolute control of information, typical of the Soviet system, to one in which new actors and media are transforming the relationship between information, communication, and politics.

Economic and material limitations, external pressures, and state control policies have historically made the island one of the countries with the lowest levels of digital penetration worldwide.[9] The possibility of connecting to the internet was inconceivable for most Cuban citizens before 2015. Despite the opportunities that arose that year with the opening of Wi-Fi hotspots and new internet cafes, the service remained expensive, slow, and restricted in terms of search capabilities.

Nevertheless, the "facilities" for access to the digital space led to a break with the logic of the monopoly of the single broadcaster and gave visibility to complaints and demands that would not have been possible, due to the characteristics of the regime, in other areas of the public sphere. The official state media have been eclipsed. Cuban leaders are forced to debate with disgruntled citizens on social media, and their responses are, at best, outrageous. In addition, digital platforms have become a testament to social inequalities, the precarious living conditions of many Cubans, abuses of authority, police surveillance, and human rights violations.

The phenomenon of digital space and its interaction with social movements has been considered in the context of the new Cuban constitution promulgated in 2019. Bobes[10] points out that social movements in Cuba are adopting new tactics and strategies, including digital activism, with the aim of strengthening their ability to articulate demands and position themselves as genuine and legitimate interlocutors with the state, particularly in the context of the approval of the new constitution. However, the collaborative dynamic of the state is limited to specific sectors, such as Afro-descendant, feminist, LGBTQ+, animal rights, and officially recognized NGOs. On the contrary, it distances itself from and sanctions organizations considered to be opposition or dissident, such as those identified as counterrevolutionary, pro-Yankee, those with external funding, or those that demand independence and autonomy from the media.

The digital space has acquired a preeminent position as a vehicle for political action, becoming intrinsically embedded in the phenomenon of activism in its broadest sense. Guiomar Rovira Sancho[11] noted that contemporary activism has distanced itself significantly from the classic militancy of previous eras. Today, social agents are connected multitudes that form performative constellations, that is, ephemeral networks that emerge around a common cause and transcend physical and geographical barriers. The virtual realm not only facilitates connections between dispersed individuals and expands the coverage of activist action, but also enables the development of actions with global reach. The emergence of these performative constellations, therefore, shapes new forms of citizen participation and political expression.

With regard to artivism, theorists specializing in visuality such as Mirzoeff[1] do not distinguish between digitality and *offline* life, that is, they do not add the adjective digital, as they consider that both spaces complement each other. For the author, artivism ly involves the interaction between pixels (the visible result of computer-generated content, such as words, images, sounds, and videos) and actions (interventions carried out with these cultural forms to instigate change, whether through direct political actions or representations in everyday life or in a theater or gallery).

Cuban artivism, as demonstrated by the *hashtags* under study, has also appropriated various digital tools to promote its messages and social criticism, creating new verbal-visual discourses in which art is presented as a catalyst for the online space. In this regard, we can also mention the # IDemand, too initiative led by Tania Bruguera, through INSTAR, which encouraged Cubans interested in

change to run as candidates in the 2018 elections.

Art and its ramifications on social media join these demands for the rights and freedoms of Cubans. The public sphere in Cuba has undergone a substantial transformation with the emergence of digital space and mass access to the Internet, as the public is now assumed to be a glocal notion,[12] structured through different levels of configuration that can be related to each other and that do not necessarily have to be linked to a physical territory. As a result, artivist actions have had a greater reach and have brought together a network of artists, intellectuals, curators, cultural managers, journalists, and interested individuals, both national and foreign, who have joined the cause. This artivism is part of the construction of alternative symbols and discourses that reveal the other side of the official history and, at the same time, establish a visual and ideological breaking point in the face of the inflexible and authoritarian power exercised by the revolution.

Artivism that is becoming more radical: from #00BienaldeLaHabana to #NoALaBienalDeLaHabana

With a clear institutional disenchantment and concern for the cultural environment following the suspension of the 13ª Havana Biennial, the #00 Havana Biennial was held from May 5 to 15, 2018. The event sought to demonstrate that personal initiatives within Cuban art could coexist with state institutions without the need for counterrevolutionary paranoia. Government galleries and museums were even invited to participate. In an interview with the organizers, Yanelys Núñez and Otero Alcántara explained that their purpose was not to be an act of aggression against cultural entities or the Havana Biennial, but to unleash Cuban art from the official bubble of the art world, reconnecting culture with Cuban social realities.[13]

Despite the attempt to collaborate with official institutions, Otero Alcántara was arrested and the independent biennial was discredited by the Hermanos Saíz Association (AHS) and the UNEAC,[14] who branded them unscrupulous and vetoed any discussion of the cancellation of the 30th Biennial and the holding of the #00 Havana Biennial. The artists' self-taught background and use of popular slang to express their opinions were among the arguments used to denigrate them.[15] On the one hand, Otero Alcántara's imprisonment sowed more fear among the Cuban creators and the exhibition venues that would participate, but on the other hand, it received greater media visibility, which was reflected in an increase in financial support and the number of participating artists.

The very name #00Bienal de La Habana distanced itself from the traditional conception of a biennial and emphasized the issue of digital space. On social media, the organizers promoted the artistic gathering, raised funds, documented the activities, and denounced the harassment they suffered at the hands of state security forces. In a regime that has "a legal and de facto monopoly on political representation/participation, seasoned with control/repression of civic activism",[16] the fact that dozens of artists residing in Cuba and the diaspora joined in demonstrated the resistance and relevance of the biennial held on the margins of the revolution.

The #00Bienal de La Habana was conceived as an inclusive, democratic event planned through collaboration between artists. With this premise, it is not surprising that the most striking element on the promotional flyer is an ant, which is associated with tenacity and effort. The anatomical structure of the insect was composed of tiny ants, creating a symbolism that alluded to unity as a means of achieving goals and bringing about change in society.

The collection of images was dominated by those linked to the promotion of the #00Bienal. In general, they were group snapshots of the participants or the works, with a rather documentary character and at times enveloped in a playful atmosphere. In some, we can see the organizers making the gesture that became the emblem of the event: the union of the thumb and index finger, forming a zero. Another type of photograph that stands out is those focused on various actions in the urban environment, ranging from graffiti to the placement of posters. The choice of graffiti as a means of leaving these marks on the streets underscores the *underground* conception of the #00Bienal, conceived from the will of the artists and without a considerable budget. As an iconoclastic act, the graffiti and fabrics intervened in this urban space dominated by giant posters praising the revolution, a space that, metaphorically speaking, is as much in ruins as the utopia of the revolutionary process.

The appropriation of the city, albeit on a small scale, not only represented an invitation to take art to the streets and distance oneself from cultural institutions, but also showed that in 2018, it was "possible" to hold an independent biennial. It also demonstrated that institutional support was not essential to organize and manage an artistic event of this magnitude in the Cuban context (around 170 national and international artists participated).

In relation to the linguistic components extracted from the image descriptions, it is noted that most of the words are related to planning and promotion, such as the name, date, and city. The mention of the city of Miami is particularly significant, as it denotes the inclusion of the Cuban diaspora as a crucial aspect in the development of the event and where exhibitions took place simultaneously with the biennial. In contrast to the political regime on the island, which—despite a certain openness—still does not grant legitimacy to the narrative of the diaspora, the #00 Biennial adopted a receptive stance toward Cubans living in Miami, recognizing them as "entities belonging to the increasingly diversified Cuban civil society".[12]

"In every studio a biennial..." is another of the most frequent terms accompanying the images. The expression that served as the motto for the artistic gathering is an adaptation of the phrase: "On every block a Committee," which referred to the Committees for the Defense of the Revolution (CDR), an organization established in 1960 for the purpose of collective surveillance and which, fundamentally, served to denounce opponents of the government. The panoptic and controlling connotations inherent in the original are removed by the invitation to hold a biennial in each studio. The slogan not only represented a conceptual reconfiguration, but also a call for the opening up and democratization of the art circuit, moving away from the coercive surveillance that characterizes the CDRs. This demand is also evident in the allusion to free art, a phrase found among the most frequent terms in the body of work.

Despite the criticism and controversy surrounding the editions of the Havana Biennial, it continued to maintain a certain popularity among Cuban and foreign artists. However, in the years following #00Bienal, the dynamics of the relationship between artists and the art institution in Cuba underwent a significant change. From a previous willingness to collaborate with institutions,

there was a shift towards a refusal to participate in the 14th edition and an invitation to other actors in the art world to do the same through #NoALaBienalDeLaHabana.

The demonstration in front of the Ministry of Culture on November 27, 2020, was a turning point and a break between artists and the institutions that represented them. Despite the presence of 500 people, from students of the San Alejandro Academy to artists awarded the National Prize, the opportunity for dialogue proved fruitless. Instead of persisting in talks with the protesters (on that day there was a commitment to a second meeting), the Deputy Minister of Culture chose to convene a meeting with a select group of artists perceived as loyal to the revolution. Creator and researcher Henry Eric Hernández[17] commented that after the aforementioned events, there was a change in mentality among Cuban artists with regard to the institution of art, one in which reconciliation was not possible in the face of the Cuban regime's censorship and violence.

Despite the government's commitment not to harass protesters, high-profile figures such as President Díaz-Canel, Foreign Minister Bruno Rodríguez, Culture Minister Alpidio Alonso, and Casa de las Américas director Abel Prieto used their Twitter platforms to confront the most rebellious participants of 27N. Cuban state television contributed to this smear campaign by broadcasting programs that denigrated the San Isidro Movement, Tania Bruguera, and journalist Carlos Manuel Álvarez. They were labeled as alleged mercenaries paid by the United States with the intention of destabilizing the revolution. Both Bruguera and Otero Alcántara were threatened by state security forces and arbitrarily detained while walking in public spaces.

Amid growing disappointment with cultural institutions and intensified repression against activists, a group of artists questioned the relevance of holding the Havana Biennial (November 12, 2021, to April 30, 2022) and called for a boycott through #NoALaBienalDeLaHabana. In an open letter entitled "Why we say NO to the 14th Havana Biennial and ask you to do the same",[18] the reasons for rejecting the Biennial were set out. These were: the house arrest of dozens of art professionals for criticizing the government, the mass arrest of Cubans during the July 11 protests, the belief that the current Havana Biennial is an attempt by the government to silence those who disagree, and the imprisonment of Cuban creators such as Otero Alcántara and singer Maykel Castillo "Osorbo." The campaign, led by well-known media figures such as Tania Bruguera and Coco Fusco, was joined by a hundred artists.

On social media, images supporting the boycott were displayed as if they were part of a series. Repeatedly, protesters—whether artists, curators, or supporters—posted a photograph of themselves, their name, and the phrase "In solidarity, I said no to the Havana Biennial." Another way they presented themselves was with a snapshot of the person holding a sign that read #NoALaBienalDeLaHabana. These images, unlike those captured during #00BienaldeLaHabana, were characterized by the absence of group and playful representations, opting for a portrait format that conferred solemnity and even an idea of closedness to the composition.

These were powerful images at the discursive level, as they were not only openly demonstrating against the Biennial, but also putting a face to the boycott by showing their faces. It was a way of individualizing these demands before the Cuban government, which devalues any direct confrontation with its policy under a homogeneous mass that it labels as dissident and counterrevolutionary.

In terms of the descriptions associated with these images, there was a significant increase—compared to the *hashtags* of 2018—in expressions against the Cuban regime such as "freedom without charges" and " Homeland and Life " (Homeland and Life), the latter an adaptation of the slogan "Patria o Muerte" (Homeland or Death) that is part of the popular imagination of the revolution. The phrase Patria y Vida was popularized by the song of the same name and became the anthem of protest during the demonstrations on July 11. In the case of "viva Cuba libre," it was a battle cry born during the independence struggles against Spanish rule. The revolution also embraced this slogan and it became part of its rhetoric. In this *hashtag,* the phrase broke away from the government's propaganda layers and returned to its original meaning: the intention to incite the struggle for a free Cuba.

In addition to this direct and explicit confrontation with the government, the linguistic corpus also yielded descriptions focused on solidarity among Cubans, with phrases such as "SOS Cuba," "everyone matters," "we are all one," and "artists united."

Likewise, there was an interest in building a better future with statements such as "we must have faith that everything will come" and "URGE change."

One of the most repeated phrases was "the right to have rights," a notion introduced by Arendt[4] in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. The right to have rights implies the political right to participate in plurality and to make judgments from within a political community. The exclusion of individuals from the national community, classifying them as stateless (counterrevolutionaries or dissidents to better anchor it to the Cuban context), facilitates the omission of the application of fundamental human rights by not considering them part of the national community.[19,20,21,22] This concept sheds light on the importance of these *hashtags* as tools of resistance and struggle to demand our rights to freedom of expression and creation.[23,24,25]

As has become a *modus operandi* of the Cuban government's official media, in a tweet on October 9, 2021, Deputy Minister of Culture Fernando Rojas responded to the alleged "provocations" by disparaging the artistic careers of those who were against the 14th Biennial. Artivism has now become a dissident activity, legally restricted in both physical and digital spaces, with striking examples such as Otero Alcántara and singer Maykel Castillo "Osorbo," who have been imprisoned for more than two years. Likewise, the creator Hamlet Lavastida was held for three months in a Cuban state security prison and forced into exile along with the poet and artivist Katherine Bisquet.

In the interval between one *hashtag* and another, there was a significant increase in harassment and persecution of artists, which led to a radicalization of Cuban artivism.[26,27,28] This change resulted in more direct language against the Cuban government and a shift from attempting dialogue with cultural institutions to a complete break in ties with them.[29,30,31] What is remarkable about the *hashtags* is that they did not remain an isolated or local phenomenon, but rather articulated a network. In Benjaminian terms, the

author becomes a producer,[32] transforming viewers into collaborators and setting aside market logic to insert himself into the social sphere (in this case, renouncing the possibility of participating in the Cuban gallery circuit and public life).[33] He subverts the art system by denying any link with Cuban cultural institutions, dispensing with the autonomy of art in order to put it at the service of the class struggle.[34] #00BienaldeLaHabana and #NoALaBienalDeLaHabana generated interstices and suspicions within the hegemonic visual complex, while at the same time carrying out a political activation through art.

CONCLUSIONS

Jacques Rancière argues that political art plays a crucial role in generating an aesthetic rupture that leads to liberation, resistance, and action. Artivism, with its actions and especially the *hashtags* analyzed, has materialized this suspension of ordinary sensory experience proposed by Rancière. Government censorship, restricted Internet access, and the threat of violent reprisals by the authorities did not deter the artivists, who developed an ability to mobilize that allowed them to transcend the borders of the national territory. The embrace of digital space in Cuban artivism has allowed for an expansion and transformation of hegemonic visuality, given the little or no representation of dissent within the media in Cuba.

The change in stance between one *hashtag* and another not only revealed the intensification of repressive mechanisms by the government towards artists and the Cuban population in general, but also evidenced a radicalization of Cuban artivism. This phenomenon moved from collaboration with different artistic institutions, through failed attempts to establish reciprocal dialogues, to the adoption of an intransigent attitude towards institutions that respond to the government.

This transformation could be seen at the linguistic level, with the shift from phrases focused mainly on the organization of the event in the #00Bienal de La Habana to directly confrontational statements against the regime, demanding fundamental rights of both creation and freedom in the #NoALaBienalDeLaHabana. In both *hashtags,* there is a notable reuse and modification of expressions that are part of the rhetoric of the revolution. As an artivist strategy, it is an act of confrontation and reinterpretation of the slogans that have been heard ad nauseam during the more than six decades of the revolutionary project.

In terms of the images, a significant transition was also observed. The visual references that accompanied the 2018 online action tended to be collective photographs of the participants and their works, documentary in nature and with an air of celebration. In contrast, for the 2021 *hashtag*, a serial aesthetic was adopted, whose main objective was to show the essential elements, such as the name and face, in order to individualize these claims. The absence of urban space in these representations can be attributed not only to the prevailing pandemic conditions, but also to the greater control of the state over the public sphere.

The #00BienaldeLaHabana and #NoALaBienalDeLaHabana hashtags created conditions of possibility for an interstice in the regime's complex visuality. These boycotts are symptomatic of the co-opted public space, the increase in exiled subjects, the fatigue in the system of symbols of the revolution, and the fissure in the symbiosis between the government, cultural institutions, and artists. Imprisonment, acts of repudiation, bans on entering the country, and physical violence by the police apparatus are some of the consequences these artists have suffered for challenging the *status quo* and disrupting the image carefully constructed by revolutionary institutions. At the same time, however, they are vindicating other ways of seeing and being seen, of existing and disagreeing.

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AUTHORSHIP CONTRIBUTION

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