

Standing up for the rights of all artists to free and independent expression

In the last few days the Cuban government has attempted to issue Decree 349 to restrict the activities of artists. This has given rise to protests in Cuba and the detention of artists Amaury Pacheco, Michel Matos, Luis Manuel Otero Alcantara, Yanelys Nuñez Leyva and Tania Bruguera, among others. Following their arrests, the artists have now been released, yet they remain under police surveillance.

Under Decree 349, all artists, including collectives, musicians and performers, are prohibited from operating in public or private spaces without prior approval by the Ministry of Culture. Therefore, individuals or businesses that hire artists without authorization can be sanctioned, and artists that work without the aforementioned prior approval can have their materials confiscated or be substantially fined.

It is important to highlight the situation in Cuba and to see it as part of a global phenomenon of the repression of artists and freedom of expression. Recent cases such as Shahidul Alam, the photographer imprisoned by the government of Bangladesh, the Saudi journalist Khashoggi, killed in the Saudi embassy in Turkey, and photographer Lu Guang, who has gone missing in China, demonstrate that governments feel newly emboldened to openly attack high-profile figures, moving beyond the usual internal state repression which used to happen behind closed doors.

In response, the **Van Abbemuseum** reiterates its support for the right of all artists to free and independent expression in the public sphere without political. We ask for any artists already arrested for opposing Decree 349 to be released.

Excerpt:

In response to Decree 349 issued by the Cuban government, the Van Abbemuseum reiterates its support for the right of all artists to free and independent expression in the public sphere.