

Danilo Maldonado Machado (El Sexto)

Letter from Prison

Valle Grande Prison
From “the (solitary confinement) cell”
September 16, 2015

Where I am there is little light. I walk around in my underwear because I don't want to wear the regular prisoner's uniform.

At night they give me the mattress for five to six hours.

I only drink water, and there will be no possibility for you all to reply to this letter because I don't want to “burn” my contacts.

Thanks to Lia, Gorki, Antonio, and everyone for helping my mom negotiate things.

Thanks to Aylín for the letters, so pretty and so encouraging. I read them as many times as I could. I would like to write you the thousand letters you deserve, but I don't think I will have enough light, paper, or energy to do it.

This is perhaps my last letter from here, in the solitary confinement cell, and if I survive, you will hear more from my lips. This is why I want to tell you all that I waited too long for this moment of [hunger] strike. We Cubans have waited too long to expel these villains.

Now that I started, I feel that my faith, my determination, and self-esteem are as high as the clouds for having decided to start a hunger strike. I feel proud of being the artist I am, and of creating the art I create for the Cuba that I stand for. That is why I am willing to give my life one hundred times over if necessary.

He who lives without finding something to die for has not found the essence of life.

A man with ideals of peace and love, who does not wield a weapon to make his opinion prevail, is the man of the future. With his faith and hope, he builds Eden on Earth.

Thanks to everyone for trusting me, and know that if I die, I will die happy if I can take an impression of my time along with me. Laura Pollán and Oswaldo Payá did this while leaving behind a mark of their existence, of their generation, of their responsibility to leave a legacy – a life lesson – for their people: to love what they do, and dedicate their lives to that.

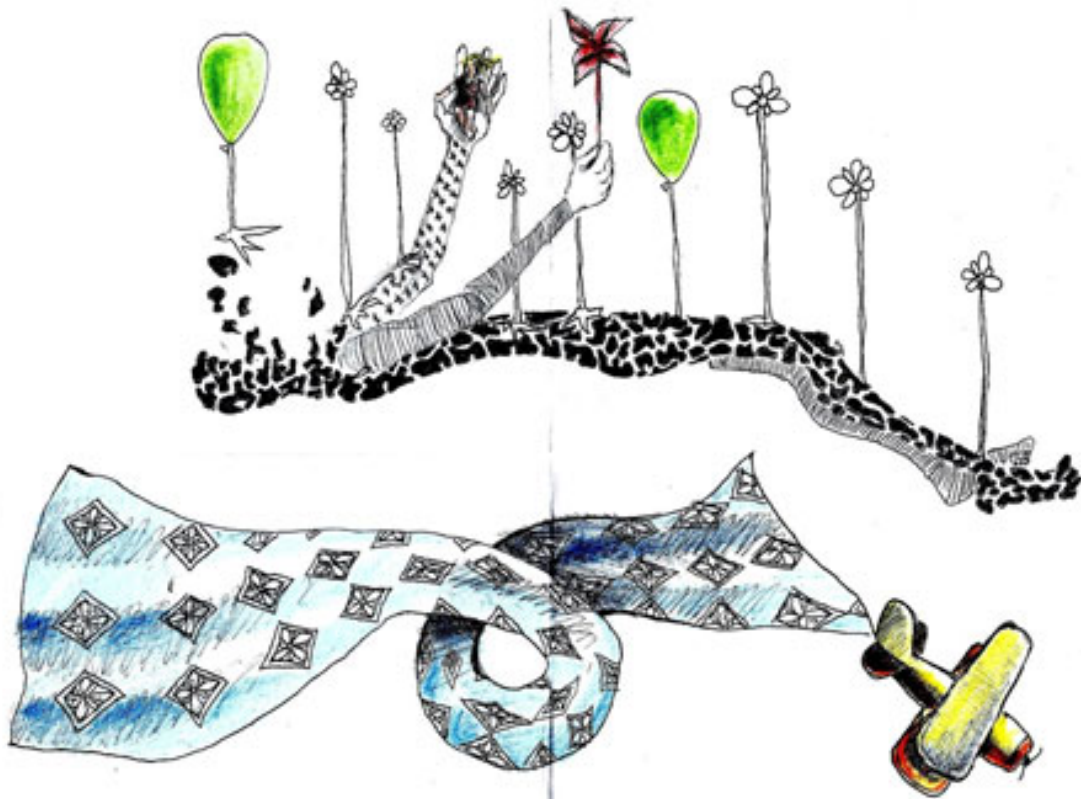
I was born in a humble neighborhood: Nuevitas, Camagüey. My family was very poor. I lived in Arroyo Arenas from the age of 4; in Charritas, Güira de Melena, Covadonga in Las Tunas: currently a country field without electricity; in Guáimaro, Camagüey and Arroyo Arenas, La Lisa. And I was lucky enough to live in Vedado many times. My daughter, Renata María, was born in England but lives in Vedado now.

I feel like a globetrotter and I have traveled around a bit, getting to know my country and my culture, which I love. That is why I raise my voice to denounce what I feel is wrong.

I visited Holland for three months. I lived in

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e-flux journal #68 — #68 december 2015 Danilo Maldonado Machado (El Sexto)
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"AL CAER"
Desde la prisión de Valle Grande
20-junio 2015 Darío Maldonado Machado
[Signature]

El Sexto's drawings made in prison, as posted on the artist's blog.

The Hague, 45 minutes by train from fabulous Amsterdam. I studied and lived at Miami Dade College, in the United States, for three months as well.

All those places taught me to relate quickly to my surroundings – that the most important thing is to have friends, to love, to respect, and not to do to others what we do not like done to us.

I learned to rise up before the powerful.

Today my art is respected mainly because I believe in it. I respected it and gave it – and still do – all my strength, dedication, affection, and love. Although I was misunderstood, and perhaps I still am by some, when those who surround you see how much you love and how much you are capable of giving and how much you respect your art and that of others, then they start to value it.

But first we must create an altar of consecration in our hearts, and everyone else will gain respect for what we do little by little: that recognition is my legacy.

Someone said that all of humanity clears a path when they see a man who knows where he is going.

This could be my last piece, and I have titled it *Calling Attention* or *The Awakening of the Inner Wizard*. Each one of us has an inner wizard. May

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this little drop of my existence touch your hearts and may it light its flame and awaken that inner leader. Be aware of this gift of life, and rise up against evil.

Someone said: “The world is not this way because of those who do evil, but because of those who allow it.”

I dedicate this piece to my mother, my little daughter, Renata María, to all who support me, all who contribute a grain of sand for Cuba’s freedom. To all the Ladies in White of the world, and especially the Cuban ones: no more violence against women! To the memory of Laura Pollán, Oswaldo Payá, and Orlando Zapata Tamayo.

The day I first grabbed a can of spray paint in my hand was the day I decided what to do with my life.

May it be so.

And with faith and conviction: *Freedom or death. To die for art is to live.*

Hugs,
El Sexto

x

Translated by Ernesto A. Suarez



El Sexto shows his tattoo of Oswaldo Payá on his back. Payá was a human rights activist who died mysteriously in 2012.



Desde la prisión "Valle Grande" 18 de junio del 2015
Titulo: Traición y los puercos verdes.

El Sexto's drawings made in prison. This drawing is titled *Treason and the Green Pigs*.

Danilo Maldonado Machado (aka El Sexto) is a Havana-based, self-taught street artist. In December 2014 he was arrested for attempting to stage a performance in Havana's Central Park with two pigs whose backs were adorned with the names FIDEL and RAUL. He was imprisoned for ten months without trial and released in October 2015.

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