

The eternal hope of Cubans, painted by a New Yorker

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New York artist James Rauchman during the opening of his exhibit "Esperando," that showcases the portraits of his friends on Cuba, in Havana, Cuba, March 29, 2018. EPA-EFE/Alejandro Ernesto

Havana, Mar 30 (efe-epa).- The eternal hope of Cubans that something will happen to make their life easier has been captured in watercolors by New York artist James Rauchman, a Cuba lover now exhibiting in Havana the portraits of his friends on the island under the title "Esperando," which translates as both waiting and hoping.



An attendee observes the works by New York artist James Rauchman during the opening of his exhibit "Esperando," that showcases the portraits of his friends on Cuba, in Havana, Cuba, March 29, 2018. EPA-EFE/Alejandro Ernesto Un hombre observa las obras del artista neoyorquino James Rauchman que componen la exposición "Esperando", inaugurada este jueves 29 de marzo de 2018 en la Fábrica de Arte Cubano (FAC) de La Habana (Cuba). La eterna espera de los cubanos de que ocurra algo que haga su vida más fácil ha sido capturada en forma de acuarelas por el artista neoyorquino James Rauchman, un enamorado de Cuba que ahora expone en La Habana los retratos de sus amigos de la isla bajo el título "Esperando". EFE/Alejandro Ernesto

Waiting under the Caribbean sun for the bus that goes by full, waiting in line at the grocery store for the regulated food quota, waiting for the visit of a loved one who left the island, waiting for a time of prosperity or of less want...a daily wait that takes on a look of exhaustion, weariness, severity or abstraction as seen in the fixed gaze of the 60 faces portrayed by Rauchman.

"What's interesting to me is that 'Esperando' has two meanings in English: waiting and hoping. In this case, I believe that both meanings are correct. I believe Cubans are hoping for a change, something that will make life easier, whatever it might be," the artist told EFE.

The exhibition starting this week on the impressive black wall of the Cuban Art Factory (FAC), a setting where the bright tones of the watercolors and of the clothes of those portrayed not only contrast with the dark background, but also with the grim expressions of the people he painted.

However, Rauchman has always seen the common denominator of Cubans to be "an incredible perseverance, the will to find happiness in life's simplest details, and the acceptance of the fact that sometimes life is going to be hard."

"All those things have inspired me," he said, while greeting, hugging and taking selfies with his islander friends, who have come with their families to the exhibition and excitedly point out their portraits on the black wall.

The watercolors portray old and young, whites, blacks and mulattos, all relaxed and sitting with their hands on their laps or on the arms of antique chairs, plastic and wicker armchairs, the traditional Cuban rocking chairs and even on a carpet.

Rauchman visited Cuba for the first time in 1997 and since then has returned 40 times. He painted the series on show between 2004 and 2006, and a selection was displayed at the Havana Biennial Art Exhibition the last of those years.

The black wall of the acclaimed FAC "is the perfect space, because separately each watercolor has a meaning, but beyond the individual portraits is the portrait of a people, which is why I want them seen together," he said.

Behind the brush strokes lie many stories, though for the New Yorker not one has a more special significance than the rest.

"They're all special to me, just like every person is unique. And they're all explorations - I've tried to explore who each one really is," he said.