

ONE ALWAYS FAILS TO SPEAK OF WHAT ONE LOVES

Philip, do I take my hat off or keep it on? Am I indoors or am I out?

Frank Lloyd Wright to Philip Johnson, when entering the *Glass House*

The title of this text about the exhibition *A Single Day is Enough* (painting, drawing and video) by Luísa Jacinto, in Ponta Delgada's Carlos Machado Museum (June 2012), is the title of one of the paintings in the exhibition. Saying this in Portuguese, «Sempre falhamos ao falar do que nós amamos», with a far lesser reverberation than in English, brings about an increased silence that arrives with the colour of fire.

When I saw the body of works selected for this exhibition, a drawing by Odilon Redon, «Winged Man» or «Fallen Angel» (c.1875, 24x33,5cm, Fine Arts Museum, Bordeaux) came across my mind in connection with the images of Luísa Jacinto, because of the sorrow that so many times colour itself inserts in its characters, in its perceptive lightnings, which mostly in her paintings are transmitted as if a lens would magnify an instant, a fragment of a life experience. Almost always – if not always – her paintings – and how they expand in the small dimensions! – are in the world (of those very paintings) as the heart is in an organism. Almost always allowing a sort of pictorial essay – a very simple one, with one or two figures – to emerge, recurrently about the arrival of someone who tries and fails and hesitates and gathers silence in the colour of the scarce space in which he or she is self-enclosed (as a character on stage), in his/her adventure of another (and of him/herself) and stays in error and falling, missing the right words about what we really love, and also, probably, about the ones we love.

The two characters of «One always fails to speak of what one loves» wait. As with so many other figures, in an almost obsessive manner, we are going to find in them, in their brief (painted) appearance, in a sort of repetition of expressions and gestures, a sort of perennial concept. There is an echo that reflects off them. These characters are as two fallen angels, similar in animus to what I found in Redon's drawing, the wings devoured by the colour of fire that envelops them. Their faces are no longer very definite. Somehow corroded by the fire of colour, they tell us of their incapacity for words about the existence of their loved being or thing. Fixedly, they seem to be there, in the painting's surface, stolen from the film of their passions, furies and sorrows. Nothing stays the same for two seconds, yet they look for some sort of perennity. Perhaps because of that the quick fire gives them a reasonableness of opposites: it fixes them; and they seem inescapably held captive by their mode of reality.

These paintings give us a complex vocabulary, in all their simplicity of means. There is in them a continuous sound of incandescence – a contact that is an eternal present, immensurable – something that *breaks* from time to time to go beyond one and another and yet another painting executed from 2007 up until now. But these two figures on the tempera of fire, themselves in a fire of silence and suspension, look like the voice of the transient and perishable, which comes and goes as human breath does, while all around the things of the world burn and yet they stopped breathing a long time ago and lay quiet in (i)mortality.

There is a phenomenological triad in Luísa Jacinto's work – the subject, art (as painting, drawing and video) and the world – that unfolds and animates itself through a deep contact with the apparent things of feeling. It leads the drawn figures, supports of corporeality and animated presence, which are the subject, to a world. A world that has only meaning in its contemplation, since in itself it is nothing more than representation. Probably this world will mix itself up with the art (painting, drawing and video) that is support and experience and even conscience of sensitive qualities, of certain intensities and of the driving physiognomy of colour. (We should notice that these three aspects are decisive in the progress and balance/unbalance created in the drawings of her *Resist* and *Flora* series)

The many faces of *Resist* (2011, gouache, ecoline or oil and acrylic gesso on paper, 30x42 cm), the countless heads of women, hieratic, ready for the corrosion of time and colour, capture an immediate intuition. Colour invades, strikes unexpectedly with its repetition of a face, of a head, of the vital value to be destroyed. It has drawing – its art – the power of reproducing things, of creating them, of making them ascend to the appearance that is a face. A face and a head that are going to repeat themselves as an innate value of a speculation about themselves: face, head. A visible manifestation, the face, the head *resist* surprised by *pathos*, for the world they now live in is only an appearance, an illusion with the consistency of a dream. Colours, sometimes watered, sometimes clamorous, invade, break the resistance, corrode, in representation, the places that were eyes and mouth and then launch an ardent and perdurable degree of intensity.

The expressive flowerings of *Resist* extend to the *Flora* series (2011, several techniques and several dimensions, on reproductions of the botanical engravings by Robert John Thornton (c. 1787-1837) *The Temple of Flora*). These drawings with collages somehow introduce in Luísa Jacinto's work the notion that the world of things is not an arbitrary and capricious dream (even when the image directs us into artificial visions) but its connection with what is hidden is necessary and impossible to suppress. This almost somnambular side of the image gives weight to the subject, a necessity that is much experienced in her painting as it is equally acting in her videos. In a way, the subject I refer to as existing in this body of work has its roots in a hidden world that gives succession, content and duration to painting titles such as “Real”, “Search”, “Close”, “Overflow” or “Action”.

“Real” (2011, oil on mahogany, 20x30cm) shows us a masculine figure extending one of his hands to a wall. “Search” (2011, oil on canvas 100x146 cm), the representation of a man – the luminosity of a yellow leads to the creation of an illusion with his image, either unfolding into a shadow or extending into a probable dog, which can also be taken as a sort of a centaur. “Near” (2009, oil on hardboard, 10x15cm), two bodies of men, expectant, one with the arm over the other. (This meaning of expectation, of waiting, that often repeats in the work on display – see, for example, “So many names”, 2011, in which an arm protects the gaze from the other, a sort of expression of “as far as the eye can see” – arrives with the weight of a suspended movement and a perceivable sense of hope, not only as feeling but as an almost tangible *thing* that still remains and that the characters foresee.) “Overflow” (2010, oil on canvas, 100x146 cm) opens to a setting of oriental illumination in which the figures live as if in a scene borrowed from a film by Zhang Yimou, where there is a static *account* (or, better, in slow movement) of the passing of a young woman from a boat to a rubber buoy. “Action” (2011, oil on canvas, 60x80cm), over a red background a woman is seated. A dreadful weight wraps her up, the exact moment before acting is captured.

To go almost randomly from one to another painting, with no concern for their chronology, only in a seeming way would give us performative contradictions. Luísa Jacinto's work here is built through an intricate relational field of physicality and spirituality. Let us approach one of her small oil paintings (on mahogany), "Overflow" (2011, 10x15cm – and these dimensions have been in painting one of the most recurrent actualizations of her *say*) to observe a house surrounded by vegetation. A house that seems to glide over a liquid surface mirroring the surrounding vegetal world. This picture (from which the human presence, so common in the majority of works, is absent) does not represent in an exclusive manner the *formation* of a matter. She is, in one time, that circumstance of a *house* and *vegetation* having been painted and drawn and that all this was *weighted* with tonalities, shadows, colours – a space of making and matter – as the intense value of a vital expression of a meaning, of an emotiveness. In truth, all that is contained there, all that is the painting "Overflow" is the artist's person, is her own self, her mode of being a subject in that instant, in the segment of time in which she *made*, in which she established her dominance over 10x15cm of useful mahogany board.

"Overflow", such as "Waiting" – (2009, oil on canvas, 61x61cm), which offers us, in a tradition of filmic pellicle, an open field (a frequent aspect of her work) where the *action*, recoiling under the weight of a drama, belongs to the stillness of a woman and a man, – reflect the whole spirituality of their time. And you will ask: "And in such a static manner, so self-contained, in which nothing seems to move!?" The answer will be: "In there is situated the exact transfer of the experienced *world* to the *art* of Luísa Jacinto". It expresses the moment of its history, of its duration, of its expectant latency which she introduces in her *making*. Her *ethos*, her *Weltanschauung*, her manner of being and feeling are present as subject reality and, above all, as a way of formulating problems of silence – in painting, drawing and video – which from 2007 to 2012 will arise between poles of energy.

Her characters, far more real than idealized, come increased with a paradox: the possibility of the impossible. They remind us both the oriental placidity of Liu Xiaodong's paintings (in "Overflow", for instance), as much as the brutality of Dana Schutz paintings with their rawness of colour, in the acid stance of many figures who contemplate the corrosion of a time (without) future. And yet the painted object is apparently still. And yet all these figures who are *there*, are *here* for an experience of the impossible and make a precise appeal to issues (much) beyond art: to ethics, to law, to politics, to responsibility, to decision.

That will be the hidden side, which a deconstruction might ask from the two faces present in «Precipice I» (2011, oil on canvas, 50x70cm) and «Precipice II» (2011, 2011, oil on mahogany, 20x30cm). In the ice of winter and in the heat of summer we come face to face with a presence and an absence, with a hypothetical and conditional dimension, with a difference between a «there is», an «is» and an «exist» and the necessary (pictorial) game of their opposites through negations. As long as there is «winter» in «Precipice I», there is not the presence of summer, but this «is» in painting «II», where, on the other hand, there is no figuration of the colour or of the theme of winter. This unfolds in an order of possibilities, that go from a virtual imagery to the mobilization of an almost audible *drawing* of gestures, participant of order, reason and feeling (and also enigma – which is always permeating this whole work), such as in the most beautiful triptych «*Slowly*» (2009, oil on panel, 10x15 cm each).

In that triptych, it is irresistible not to find a narrative bent. A «as if». If in many paintings before the quietism (and more than a quietism, intimacy) of figuration there is a legitimate (an illegitimate) «nothing is going on» or «nothing happens», in *Slowly*

there is a (*painted*) performative act. We have the presence of hands that speak, that represent an S and that belong to the figure P. (S is P). S lets itself be commanded by the performative *speech act* of P, of a subject P. This way the painting produces, in the end, with those developing hands and with that man's face, a controlled and programmed horizon, a legitimate fiction and more than that a complicity with potential readers/spectators. All this goes on in the simplicity of three pages, excuse me, of three tiny panels. But this limpidity of image in *Slowly* does not completely hide what we can later see in the development of the series *Resist*, where an appeasement and an almost self-forgetfulness, as a figure who hides behind statuary drawing marks, approaches and expands in a colour implosion process, which inside that pattern of face and head goes from apathy to the fairness of a *fuck off*. (Intentionally, *Resist* is going to be presented by large on two showcases and randomly.)

The Promise and The Dream (2009, 4'), *Things Change Quickly* (2010, 11'30'') and *A Single Day Is Enough* (2012, 5'12'') are the four videos present.

The Promise begins with an image that wants exactly to be a *thing*: a glass of water that has a bunch of very green parsley. And the *thing* presented is a limpid image. Over this space of balance, the fall of a liquid begins: white, thick, dirty white, apparently caramelized. And all the space of natural beauty, that assisted *ab initio*, gradually collapses: the parsley leaves turn lax, wilted and tumble down the glass edges. The liquid has spread around. The image closes. It then opens to *The Dream*. Nothing is left of the glass or the withered parsley. Only the liquid remains spread on the floor. A thick, brownish white. The artist's face erupts. It comes down thrice over this liquid and licks it.

The Dream made the creator subject intervene in the action. The artist – like an *ex-machina* divinity – came down to intervene, as someone telling us (what has been, by the way, subtly indicated on all pieces since 2007) that there is a hidden reign behind the apparition of images.

Things Change Quickly. Things, indeed, change quickly. But a ballast always remains and through it there is a physicality of things that coincide past change. These signal remnants last beyond the psychic state of the one who beholds them. In this video, all starts with the white volume of a bed sheet. Its composition follows the life of a character (similar to any of those whom we have found in the isolation of her paintings) in a city apartment. The themes of the small gestures and of a continuous observation of the quotidian succeed each other, as small cuts made in the image by a sculptor's chisel, in search of interrogations and a future form. The morning is seen beyond the window. The ivy on a wall, the shadow of a tree's branches. We sense a gaze of melancholia – or is it instead a greeting to the rising morning?

The composition develops underneath an organic quality – that of the figure that lives the day inside the house and of the action of time, which will be punctuated by the passage from day to night, and again by the final return to the light of the following daybreak. The geometric projection of a shadow, coming from the angle of an ajar door. The bathroom tiles, the water running in the bathtub, the foam, light reflections on water, the multiple shimmers. And then the water running into a vortex, so to finally set free the metallic brightness of the spherical rim of the drain. The curtain's plastic, wet. It is a video that presents physical objects as evidence. They are being perused by a determined figure. Of that figure we are only given, like its reflections, "things". That is, the evidence of a physical world. But it is proper to the video to show us more; and what it is *showing* concerns the impenetrability of a spiritual world.

Night falls. In the solitude of the apartment the sight of the night light. The rain droplets fasten themselves in many glows to a window glass. The illusion, really, of a

sky with distant stars. The street lamp. The rain. The light angles. The door that was, again, left ajar. The luminosity opens in the paleness of sleep and reflects in the wall of one of the rooms, in a bluish visual field. The day is back. Above the trees. Above the branches. And the water for a bath has returned. It describes a fleeting blue that withdraws into itself.

A Single Day Is Enough. This video from 2012 gives the title to the exhibition. There are many possible readings with which to approach these images. Steps that offer us a continuous going down. It is possible that it holds a synthesis of all the work that is being shown at the Carlos Machado Museum. It sets us to a regular rhythmic movement, step by step. Something we also find in her painting; as it also tells us of a vertiginous descent, of someone who can make these staircase steps – that go from staircase to staircase – an escape to the inside of an imagined labyrinth. This is comparable to the running water in the video *Things Change Quickly*. The brief steps introduce a plasticity of micrologic reading. The escape through the vulnerable and the sensitive is what first occurs. But suddenly a meticulous density invades in a single blow the thought and the physical *act* of descending.

The steps imply the presence of hierarchies. In a way, they are latent in their own construction, in their drawing and use, in their functionality. Over this *being made* material – the steps – as if the presence of an inflexible gaze is transmitted, originating an escape practice. We hear steps, we see no one, but a gaze is stepping down those steps. An escaping gaze. A subversive gaze. The hierarchies, the undertakings – steps represent both – are ways that allow the escape from an uninhabitable world.

(Luísa Jacinto's figuration constantly says: «We are from this world, but in this world we feel as foreigners among foreigners». And, nevertheless, this gravitates, almost always, around an apparent serenity.)

A Single Day is Enough brought me with it to a resonant space. Because it is built by visible fragments of stairs, its succession offers us the idea of *fugue*. Each step is a stage, such as I find in *The Art of Fugue*, by J.S. Bach. *Contrapuncti* that succeed each other and in the end enable the (un)limit of the escape. The escape, in the end of the last step of *A Single Day Is Enough* – in June 2012 – will have the island border outside. And in the descent's vortex, the island will creak slightly, like a boat hull when the wind raises the sail.

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