

## Split city, history in pieces

We need stories to live. We can believe on the Great Fiction of good manners, habits, jobs or retirements or we create our own narratives about what we have to do with our own lives. Another option is to take over assumed mythologies by the centuries, as some religions, mythologies who are based on a greater scale than the one of our bodies, such as astronomy.

There are still more prosaic alternatives, the ones attached to what is precarious and fragile elements of everyday life: reading the grounds of a coffee drink, tying laces on the lover's underwear, interpreting swirls drawn by the birds in the air, or hearing soft words from the rustle of the leaves on a gale. These are pocket mythologies, from who bet that stories told are more important than the evocation of a great authority to legitimate them.

Ícaro Lira, although spends a significant part of *Desterro*, his work in progress, travelling to places charged with history - as Canudos or the concentration camps made in Ceará in order to control rural exodus - seems to match with the fragile ways of building narratives adopted by those who have little power. Icaro reads newspapers and history books, researches documents, gathers testimonies, but does not collect impressive bibliographies neither constructs thesis or academic dissertations: he searches meanings over the folds of blurred and stained documents and announces comments over the past through delicate arrangements of the collected material.

Split city, the exhibition he held for *Temporada de Projetos do Paço das Artes*, weaves a net of stories of rise and fall of Antonio conselheiro's Belo Monte in Canudos and the future within its ruins. In this weaving, we find on equal hierarchy, among many things: stones and sargassum collected around the city, photographs of a dam built there, an anonymous handwritten letter, recent headlines from São Paulo newspapers, history books and even selected excerpts from the book *Walking On Ice*, by Werner Herzog. The absence of hierarchy and clear separation between these parts are as important as its presence, because there is where the narrative precariousness created by the artist lays.

It would be possible to build stories legitimated by transcendent authorities even by telling only of rotten rags, as in the case of Holy Shroud - to do so it would be enough to create a clear hierarchy between what should and should not be valued. In Ícaro Lira's work, that is what is missing. It is possible to spend hours in there just decoding ruined fragments. To say it better, it is necessary to do so.

Necessary it is, if it is interesting to the visitor to overcome the first moment of delight with the formal work display, its visual rhymes and enchainment of colors, textures and shapes of the gathered material. Of course, if there is something to be admired on the room layout, it is expected this is to be noticed. But the very way of how these objects and papers are exposed shows that there are other parameters at stake beyond the formal blending between them. Even more than exposed, these objects shelter and are sheltered by one another. Also, they are not loose on a disorder simulation, but, instead, they are anchored on one another. If there is a stone, it can be over a yellow fabric; a shell over a piece of cheap paper; a book page marked by a piece of rock, and so on. There is always an object protecting another one, and being protected by another, in reciprocity.

This is not the museum model, on which stands are always visual and symbolically neutralized to highlight the items "in exhibition". The accommodation of things on

Ícaro Lira's work is also closer to the humble way of how the simplest homes of countryside are arranged - figure this: the old tin kettle carefully layed beside the red plastic coffee cup, in the table center decades old, covered by an embroidered tablecloth, besides by a song box made in China and bought on a fair of things brought from Paraguai. Is it possible to approach this arrangement style as an installation model? Maybe it is unusual, but when Ícaro learns with theses homes detachment how to create his artwork, he finds out an exquisite logic which is proper to the non academic knowledge of his research of Canudos history.

It lacks, so, a last remark over the tactics chosen by the artist. Besides the airy narrative of a conflictuous past, marked by the inexorable tendency to ruin, Ícaro Lira indicates his interest on the future - look again at the content of newspapers, in and out of the exhibition, find Canudos on the photographs taken on Paulista Avenue, on evicted bodies of "pacified" slums and in the collective mess of possible projects for this country.

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