

Preface of the "SuperRio Superficções" magazine

by Bernardo José de Souza

The world is moved by dark forces.

Existing right alongside what we call reality, there is a supernatural level with connected symbolic figures, a dimension that is just as deceitful and insidious as it is effective in manipulating the political arena governing our planet in the early decades of the 21st century.

Beyond the sociological spectrum based on scientific models which owe much to the theoretical legacy of the 20th-century, a fictional landscape comes into view that defies the most basic laws of nature, the wicked and evil economic practices and the established but imaginary political, spiritual and even geographical order of the world.

Superficções ("superfictions") is a cosmogony developed by Antoine Guerreiro do Divino Amor to explore a reality that lies beneath our – artificial and camouflaged – mainstream existence. It is a map of rare beauty and acuteness. It may appear paradoxical, but giving a short summary of that other world – which is actually our own world – requires a clear head and some rational thinking, which might help us, even if only a little, to understand the artist's motives for dreaming up such madness that is brimming with insights and visionary talent. (If I were to claim that it wasn't a challenge to figure out the meaning of the artist's work, I would also be talking fiction; and although I take my inspiration from him, his fiction would take precedence over mine in exposing the crude and banal reality of life.)

Antoine Guerreiro do Divino Amor holds a degree in architecture from the École Nationale Supérieure d'Architecture de Grenoble. As the child of a Swiss father and a Brazilian mother from Rio de Janeiro, he is a half-breed in the best postcolonial sense of the word. The name Guerreiro (meaning "warrior") comes from his mother's side, while the name Divino Amor ("divine love") was taken from one of his stepmothers, a pastor in an evangelical church in Rio de Janeiro. In his early investigations of the underlying reality of the world, he had recourse to the philosophers and masters who construed the universe according to the perspective and mindset of Western civilization. But the canon of works that conquered the world after the unfortunate advent of modernity forced the artist to perform a radical shift in his thinking to be able to challenge the traditional power structures, which are unstable and ineffective despite their apparent robustness and are directly linked to the vertical hierarchies of academia and science.

Interested at first in the powers that conspire to determine the course of our epic misfortunes on this planet, the artist ultimately abandoned the global perspective and, as a consequence, the project of developing a new sociopolitical and symbolic theory of megalomaniac proportions. Instead, he headed south in an iconoclastic return to the maternal tropics, which inspired him to explore the complex reality of the New World – following the example set by Lévi-Strauss almost a century earlier.

Bathed in the sunlight and the warm equatorial waters of this new environment, Antoine Guerreiro do Divino Amor rediscovered not only the scents and memories of his childhood but also the fears, adventures and fantasies that had marked his adolescence: sex and religion wrapped in a euphoric haze, transgression and authoritarianism. And because tensions dominate the world, and advances are possible only because of them, the revolution in his theoretical thinking in Brazil gave fresh impetus to his seminal explorations of the social dynamics and political upheavals of humanity.

With the aim of finally capturing the superreality that keeps us going as we wearily go about our business day in day out, he focused on the local sins and crimes as well as on the unscrupulous façades of a country that insists on making a clean sweep of its history and always refers to a promising future which it has never actually experienced. This is why the author Stefan Zweig came up with the slogan “Brazil, country of the future!” and why the former Brazilian president Juscelino Kubitscheck coined the phrase “50 years in 5 years” (under Kubitscheck, it took only such a short period of time to build the city of Brasília, which the architect Sérgio Bernardes described as a blatant “historical blunder” for a variety of reasons, such as shutting the people out of the centres of power).

Now, well into the new millenium, we know that our representative democracy is a sham – just like many others around the globe, incidentally. We know that we are still governed by the oligarchs who ruled our country for much of history, and by the dominant media outlets and their cunning advocacy of reactionary ideas that are currently stirring up the country. Therefore, it is imperative that we look for semantic and symbolic alternatives that can make sense of the inferno created by a fascist and secretive political elite, which is activating the same old mechanisms of corruption that come attached with power – not to mention the prominent role played by the evangelical church in the process of imposing outrageous tax laws on people in the name of the “divine” power.

Superficções takes a closer look at Rio de Janeiro, the place that represents the quintessence of the Brazilian way of life, where racism, prejudice and government brutality are swept under the carpet, a tableau presented to the masses, painted in tropical colours with a sublime, fictional beauty which it scatters over the world as an antidote against their ranting. The “sociological” categories conceived by Antoine Guerreiro do Divino Amor undermine the maintenance plans of the traditional echelons of power, replacing them with a new order that operates above and beneath the realm of us mere mortals. Its gassy, poisonous effects can no longer be sublimated and rise to the surface like lava from volcanoes, an allegorical reflection of the horrific underworld that might even blind the dull eyes of the dignitaries who look down on the rabble from their golden governmental palaces.

While we insist on living within the matrix of the artificial reality without asking any questions, the superfictions reveal a new universe that is as productive as the workers who are generating our mystical wealth, always promised but never attained. Everything is political, as the artist would have us know.

Like a sort of sphinx on LSD, he asks a riddle: “Open your eyes and tell me, what is it that flows in the open veins of the Brazilian people – mud or glitter?”