

Conversation with Cabelo, by Luiz Camillo Osorio

Cabelo, what was your training like at Parque Lage (Visual Arts School)? How did you go from being a worm-farmer to being an artist? What were your main influences at this initial moment?

My training at Parque Lage was relatively brief: I entered on 08/08/88 and stayed until the beginning of the 1990s. I began attending the drawing classes, then painting, theoretical classes, but it was in the sculpture shed, in the classes of João Goldberg, that I began to produce my first works.

The journey from worm-farmer to artist happened gradually. At this time, I would come to the EAV (Visual Arts School) straight from the plantation, I'd open up the trunk of the car and sell beans, brown rice, bananas, coconuts, yams...

When I entered Parque Lage, my only references were basically Picasso and Miró. Later I was enchanted by the drawings of Roberto Magalhães. Little by little, through the teachers and lectures by artists, I came into contact with the works of Joseph Beuys, Artur Barrio, Tunga, Cildo Meirelles, among others who influenced me.

I confess that when I stopped raising worms, I let them raise me: from the shit to the hummus, in an infinite progression.

What was it like to have gone to the Documenta de Kassel (1998) so early? How did you assimilate this opportunity and what do you think remains of it?

Going early to the X Documenta of Kassel, in 1997, was a confirmation that my intuition about what I was doing was on the right track, as I had very little, or almost no dialogue with critics or curators from here. In parallel, I was recording the record of my band, Boato, which would come out the following year. It was the first time I had set foot in Europe. I had censorship problems with my work, and I had intense battles defending it. It was a beautiful learning process: I lost a lot of my naivety and I was burnt from the off.

The relationship between music and the visual artist was and remains constant. Do you regard this as a division or as complementary powers?

Visual production and musical production have always gone hand in hand, and in the beginning, they were expressed in parallel. Gradually they began to contaminate and complement each other, to the point where, not only excerpts of songs inspired the work with plastic objects, but also, for example, a sculpture made from the remnants of a boat with skateboard wheels inspired a chorus, and became the inspiring muse of a song.

The relationship with poetry, with the word, is another element that permeates your performative work and its graphic restlessness. From the word to the

drawing, from the voice to the line, it's the same experimentation with language and the body. Talk a little about these productive processes, these expressive moments.

Poetry is the matrix of my work. At the origin of creation is sound, the word, the vibratory frequency, music... And together with music the body that dances, plays, listens, sings, draws, writes... I've often caught myself making sounds and singing, while drawing... Everything happens simultaneously... I watch lines becoming letters, syllables forming words that turn into beings... For me the body is the vehicle, the means, the horse, the seismograph, the radio station... The challenge is to administer the daily charge of energy that the body receives... Art is the trail that this body leaves in its wake.

Your work also had various moments of poetic partnership – Boato, Tunga, Jarbas, Raul. What is this process of co-production like for you? What is strongest and most difficult about these poetic collaborations?

All these partners, each with their own unique personalities, are friends, partners in life. So, these collaborations happen naturally, with great pleasure and little difficulty. I have learned and continue to learn from them all. These partnerships are always enriching, and take place through dialog, silence, respect and mutual trust.

Does your work belong to the poetic universe of Rio de Janeiro or does it have no ground/sky of its own?

Elements of Carioca (Rio) culture clearly form part of my poetic universe; they are present in my body and wherever I go I carry all this with me. Likewise, when I cross the city of Rio, I am permeated by the waters of the river of Heraclitus, carrying in my pocket the Marriage of Heaven and Hell by William Blake. I hear the Cosmic Chant of Ernesto Cardenal and visions come to me of Ayahuasca, the teachings of the Vedas, the silence of the Buddha, images from the Hubble Telescope and the imaginary eras...

What doesn't interest you as an artist? What most bothers you about the art world?

As an artist, everything interests me. There are certain things I don't like, but I don't have time to get annoyed; art is much bigger than the art world.