



PSM  
Sabine Schmidt  
Schöneberger Ufer 61  
10785 Berlin  
phone: +49 30 75524626  
office@psm-gallery.com  
www.psm-gallery.com

## **Marilia Furman** ***wrong position***

Opening reception: Saturday, June 1, 6 – 9 pm  
Duration of the exhibition: June 04 – July 13, 2019

### *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny*

In different sociological, artistic or journalistic representations, be they national or foreign, Brazil is commonly portrayed as a society with a structural duality – economically divided and of pendular temporality: at the same time modern and backward, characterized by the richness of its popular culture (of African matrix) and by its concentrated wealth (in the hands of a white oligarchy), also participating in the global geopolitical imaginary sometimes as "country of the future" (according to Stefan Zweig's slogan), or sometimes as the stage of the most heinous social, political and environmental crimes. In recent years, the covers of the English magazine *The Economist* portrayed the country as a redeemer rocket, which miraculously "took off" in 2009 only to have "blown it" in 2013 (resulting, in 2018, in "Latin America's latest menace").

### *Dialektik der Aufklärung*

It is in this scenario that the artistic production authored by Marilia Furman has been recognizing, for almost a decade now, the deep shadows projected by the blinding lights of "progressive" modernization processes (or "neo-developmentalists", in Latin American economic jargon), with particular interest in the violent material reality of their intangible mechanisms of production of the sensible. Previous works, developed during the rise of Brazil's global image of an "advanced" country (apparently resistant to the global economic crisis that began in 2008, anchored by commodities' prices growth... as well as interest rates), bore a strong material and formal unity, in which duality, contrast and polarization gained aesthetic configuration by opposing different objects and materials. Therefore, instruments and tools (hammers, meters, screwdrivers, searchlights etc.) were placed in conflicting interaction with mouldable materials from the chemical-industrial sector (iron, glass, wax, plaster etc.). With a plain metaphorical sense, a work such as *Resistance* (2013), in which glass plates were subjected to the intense light of a halogen lamp, whose heat dilated the material to the point of rupture, emerges as critical model.

### *Die Antiquiertheit des Menschen*

Considering this, it is worth noticing in the most recent production, presented in *wrong position*, a striking abandonment of the raw physicality of these materials, favoring instead the repeated use of visual signs of consumption – especially images, logos, slogans and other cultural mediations. Surreptitiously stolen from the formidable storage room of the Spectacle, such signs take shape in various conventionally artistic techniques: drawings, videos, installations, ready-mades etc. The hijacking of signs and visual procedures manifests itself as a strategy of action when faced with the catastrophic image of the violent decomposition of social ties, on a national and global scale, a decomposition politically regulated by image devices of personal messaging and internet *memes* – where the self-destruction of life is experienced as an aesthetic pleasure of the order of the entertainment. The usage of varied visual media, much like an avid consumer wanting to try "one of everything", emulates, in the solo show's individual dimension, the social fact that images accumulate *ad infinitum*, which attests at the same time to its suffocating omnipresence – that is, totalitarian – and to its structural fragility – that is, its existence in ruin.

### *Bildbeschreibung*

On the surface of these image-based works, Brazil always appears as a theme, its politics and its history literally represented in accordance with aesthetic means and categories. In *Dictation* (2019), for example, a work presented as a collection of exercises and sketches (visual allusion to the phonic method of literacy currently encamped by the Brazilian government in its crusade against constructivist approaches), halfway between the detailed interest of copying old masters' drawings and the agile and expressive observation of the academy figure, the pompously "heroic" effigies of the nation's "*founding fathers*" (or their symbolic correlate in official Brazilian historiography) are embarrassingly recovered from a textbook adopted in Brazilian schools in 1971, at the height of the political repression and ideological censorship by the Brazilian military dictatorship (1964-1985). *The parade of political self-representation and myself* (2019), given the recent



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authoritarian sedimentation, complements the previous work: it presents, as ready-mades, cheap plastic masks – sold during this year's carnival, supposedly representing national politicians and show-business personalities (the masks' poor renditions make them, in most cases, unrecognizable or easily confused, even by a Brazilian) – together with *blockbuster* characters of the global cultural industry and the mortuary mask of the artist herself.

#### *Der Kollaps der Modernisierung*

In both cases, the artist appears subjectively implicated in the tragedy of collapsing social processes: in the former, through the drawings' deliberate contained gestural qualities; in the latter, through the death mask. There are also other examples of the intrinsic connections between the global social process (seen through Brazilian lenses) and aesthetic-visual procedures: *Knife in the skull* (Rio-SP air shuttle) (2019) is literally a mockup of the logo of the Special Police Operations Battalion (Batalhão de Operações Policiais Especiais - BOPE), the incredibly violent tactical unit responsible for the so-called pacification of Rio de Janeiro's favelas (a policy massively implemented starting in 2010, still under the Lula administration, which gave rise to the current hegemony of paramilitary militias in Brazilian politics); *unintelligible* (2019) presents the tense relations between the (Eurocentric) production of knowledge (including the prints of traveling artists) and the physical and epistemic genocide of the original American populations; while *Chain (inverted proportion Landscape or G7, Brazil and China)* (2019) parodically reconfigure the romantic experience (and the aesthetic category) of the sublime, in face of the incommensurability and the psychological-physiological disturbances vertiginously experienced in the peaks and slopes of economic life and its representation in line graphics (where Brazilian figures of the last two decades appear as an illustrious supporting actors amongst a select group of economies).

#### *Warenform und Denkform*

It should be noted that, counterintuitively, with this profusion of expressive means, the works become more permeable to the multiplicity of phenomena and to the contingent elements of reality (historical facts, political situations, news, cultural commodities etc.), whose indexes and fragments gain emphatic, though ambivalent, visibility. In the same direction, there is an openness to improvised aesthetic solutions or, better yet, appropriate to the flow of the occasion – in which, on the other hand, language starts to be effectively constituted on a case-by-case basis in each work, in confrontation with specific issues, and no longer as a whole. Despite the effectiveness of the visual enunciations (and the semantic contents they carry with them), it is important to note that the abandonment of the dryness and sobriety of the media (which previously structured the artist's laconic but assertive poetics, tacitly assuming a certain subjective, authorial unity) in favor of a diffuse myriad of artistic or semi-artistic visual means and procedures – sometimes sharply parodic, sometimes acting clumsy and dubious – corresponds rather to a dynamic of displacements, still aiming the structural dimension of social processes and the psychic-cognitive apparatus (in shreds) of the subjects produced there (now implicating, to an uneven, but combined extent, the public and the artist herself).

#### *Öffentlichkeit und Erfahrung*

Therefore, the wavering expressiveness of drawings, for example, can be taken less as a value in itself – offered affirmatively to an abstract observer-subject who would enjoy it aesthetically – than, in a nod of critical complicity, as a sign of that profusion (of expressive means) and the disintegration (of the subject). In this hypothesis, the profusion of images and visual operations, like an immense accumulation of cultural commodities, might manifest a deep discomfort with the very position of the artistic means, supports and procedures, as well as of the individuals, in the different social spheres of art production, circulation and consumption – offering a glimpse of protest, no matter how small, and a feasible image, no matter how precarious, of a different position... one that has at least the merit of being radically opposed to one that is right.

– Gustavo Motta