

BEYOND THE WHITE CUBE

Regina Silveira's Interventions

The intense relationship between art and architecture is not new. Just consider the way different media were incorporated through history: sculpture, for instance, found in Greek temples, Romanic churches and Gothic cathedrals, or paintings inscribed in internal and external areas of palaces, chapels, etc, in the context of Western history.

Somehow it could be said that up to approximately the 15th century, not only architecture and all other arts coexisted, but also the former enjoyed privileged relevance. Architecture stood as place and destination, the reason of the work as a whole. This chimeric fusion of arts becomes unbearable around the 19th century, and all expressions become increasingly independent over time. However, the functionality relation of this discipline (spaces of use, lodging, etc.) withdraws from the proclaimed linguistic autonomy of visual arts - thus the significance of the trend among contemporary artists of working jointly with architecture, the spaces beyond the white cube – its visual purity -, so mythified by modernity.

The multiple art experiences over the 20th century, more concretely from the 1960s on, have allowed the reacquisition of spaces, places of action and other spaces, which take into consideration the exhibition itself as place and artwork. The semantic fields of happenings, performances, environments and installations explore these new dimensions, away from the white, neutral ideology of classical rooms and normative limits separating art and the world's reality, and closer to a greater porosity with our lives, communications, spaces and times. If the “eternity of exhibition” (quoting Brian O'Doherty) proclaimed within the gallery or museum space does not allow such contamination and lies untouched in some sort of half world of temporal circumstance, most of the critical interventions sought by contemporary art are about how to think space and its power relations, how to constitute a new expositive topology and, based on such de-territorialization, draft less bipolar space-time coordinates. Collaborating for the transition from an art of space to a more time-based art of becoming is an instigating current practice, mostly when we are aware that our habitat has changed as much as our perceptions. This is a new visuality regime.

Regina Silveira's poetics finds itself inserted in this mutant context, as she possibly is the artist who brings such aesthetic problematic into their work most assertively and frequently nowadays. “Outside art's protected spaces, it is the transforming power of art which has been into function with double strength, whenever it provides new experiences into reality and is able to replace an indifferent gaze with a more curious, participative attitude”, says the artist. This change encompasses a whole trend of her works, which is linked to architectonic spaces (inner spaces first, followed by threshold places and then unequivocally outside spaces, interchanged over time as if they were different researches). In the passing of these decades in which her production of images has been embodied by a variety of architectures, we find works that already bear a spatial reading with much precedence, such as *Símile: Office 2* [1992], *Apartamento ou Graphos* [1996] or *Auditorium* [2002]. All of them present distorted furniture designs, producing imaginaries and not less vertiginous images that play with an imploded bi-dimensionality. Works like *Solombra* [1990], *Behind the Glass* [1991], *Vórtice* [1994], *Equinócio* [2001], and *Captura* [2001] emphasize such work in the boundaries of internal/external space, resulting in passages-works. Interventions in the realm of Arte/Cidade (São Paulo) also reinforce this limitrophe concern about the urban space, the city *locus*: *Cor Cordis* [2002], especially, or the environment interaction through the outdoor projections of *Super-herói (Night and day)*[1997], or *Transit* [2001]. For it is the inclusion of that city-born,

contaminated flow of plural contacts and records into the artwork that enables a great deal of the aesthetic situations presented. As defined by the artist herself, “over the last years, some works and interventions have been interacting with architecture in an urban scale level, in which the city itself supports the visualization”. In fact, most of her works in this field are space-time *in situ* meditations, as well as the triggering for the non-passive experience of artwork.

A transition towards exploring the counterpart of shadows is part of her latest production more and more manifestly – the artist has already built an actual cartography of works, an extensive repertoire -: that is, light. In that sense, her three large exhibitions, *Claraluz* [2003] at CCBB in São Paulo (Brazil), *Lúmen* [2005] at the Palacio de Cristal/Centro de Arte Reina Sofía in Madrid (Spain), and *Ficções* [2007] at Museu Estação Vale do Rio Doce in Vitória (Brazil) make up a trilogy as they render a cohesion that is not required by other interventions presented by the artist in other continents. Light, as an event and as structure, offers high density effects and reflexes in them, regardless of its true nature or its luminous source (either existing or imaginary). In fact, such trilogy shares a concern about visually exploring light, about recording/inscribing light in spatial structures, about linking the immaterial to a strong physicality (buildings of strong presence), and turning its appearance on architecture into a situation, a new construction imbued with some mystery or magic having invasion and fragmentation as operating strategies. And there is always a cognitive mirage in it, the quest for a state of *poiesis* (invention), of visual genesis.

If by Renaissance it was demanded by Vitruvius (in *De Architectura, Liber primus*) that among other knowledges, one should “know how to read the stars and be familiar with the heavenly system”, it is coincidental that over the last years the artist has been mapping a visual cosmology where we are inserted as dwellers, yet bewildered by what we see. The increasing presence of the sky, the heavenly universe, of light as a horizon – from *Equinócio* [2000] or *Lunar* [2002-03] to the aforementioned trilogy – is not exempted from an allegoric component (vast in significance).

Concurrently to that circumstance, the game of linking virtual visuality as fiction, sometimes bodiless, to spatial contexts of vast materiality grows in Regina Silveira’s poetics, thus causing a feeling of lightness and dense sensorial vibration at the same time. It is a paradoxical reality that lies on the images paradox itself, its always expanded effects, even more when the device of replicating reality (doubly dubious) creates an explicit illusionism and, consequently, a suspended visuality.

Nonetheless, her catalog of works over the past five years reflects an international inventory pointing towards several planet corners (Mexico, Houston, Bogota, Lima, New Delhi), and exceeds this text. Yet, that itinerary comprises the *Derrapando* intervention [2004], a site specific piece at the Centro Cultural España (Montevideo, Uruguay) that shows an invasive assemblage of tyre tracks on the building’s façade, *Irruption Series* (Saga) [2006], at the 6th Taipei Biennial, which covered the building’s external area with peculiar human prints, or *Mundus Admirabilis* [2007], at Brasília’s CCBB, where a nightmarish, transparent architectural box was composed with large scale insect prints.

Urban interventions produced in the architectural context, with motion projection, should not be forgotten. Perhaps *Noorluz* [2005], presented in the World Performing Arts Festival in Lahore, Pakistan, best reflects the essence of moving images, the time-based image that, like a chameleon, metamorphoses itself wherever it may pass by: the word *light* in Urdu calligraphy projected over popular places in town.

Within the same challenge, all the artist’s interventions contain some de-construction of space and de-contextualization of its physical requirements, expressed in the most recurring aspects of her work, whether it is the reading of external areas and architectures through analyzing luminous

sources with distinguished imagetic amazement and poetic, perceptive puzzlement, or the thrust of chosen images (insects, tracks, footprints, etc) that manages to dismantle the established sense of a place, nonexempt of some critical irony. In any case, the wide range of visual simulations executed compose a (constructive/de-constructive) language poetics that is aided by the visual industry technology (dichroic gobos, projections and digitalized making) in order to concoct enchanting works, emancipatory visualities.

The remarkable presence of architecture in art, particularly in Regina Silveira's works, is a symbol of approaching the art-life flow, closer to the visual impurity in which we find ourselves every day, which also represents the reconquest of places as context, away from earlier decoration or mural ornaments, where another aesthetic perspective and repositioning is achieved. It is also a large scale spatial appropriation, a bet on hybrid works whose linguistic modifications alter spatial signs. Such reading of places is undoubtedly focused on the interrelation of every space requirements (either architectonic, environmental or socio-political ones) in order to attain another aesthetic, mixed, multidirectional experience (not in vain, architecture as a means is intrinsically impure: it admits seeing, living and dwelling). In fact, all site-specific works and space interventions – the so-called public works by the artist – are related to the inhabitancy of the world promoted by art on the path for a new visuality.

Adolfo Montejo Navas

Dardo Magazine, Santiago de Compostela, n. 13, / fev.-mai. 2010