

Regina Silveira

Almost 10 years of exploration of illusionist perspectives passed before Regina Silveira's works reached their moment of international insertion. This reveals the difficulties of a career made in Brazil, increased by the distance from the art market and from the ideology of the official selections. Nevertheless, we can already find her readiness for a cosmopolitan interchange in the phase prior to the present objectives, that is the artistic language of the multimedia artist of the 1970's. At that time she concentrated on graphic processes of image reproduction, essentially working with drawings. Using silkscreen-her favorite- plus offset, blueprint, xerox and microfilm, she developed a thematic of significations that transited between humor and critical messages. This material, which widely and creatively used the potential of technological resources, became known through exhibitions in Brazil and abroad. The artist's active involvement with mail-art-the movement that opposed the cult of the artistic object-is worth mentioning. This period, which included experience with video art, is linked by its conceptual elements to the future evolution of her work.

In the 1960's, Regina Silveira began to paint, draw and make prints, showing empathy with figurative expressionism, a tendency with strong roots in the modernism of the country. This inclination quickly changed under abstract informal influences and more radical political changes. In Europe, at the end of the decade, she was awakened to the possibilities of spaces elaborated through geometric forms. The direct consequences of this rationalist absorption could be seen on reliefs and objects that she built with industrial materials.

When she moved to Puerto Rico in 1969, a rupture occurred between the artist-as-craftsman and the one that began to be interested in the modern means of reproductivity. The right atmosphere existed on the island for her to get enthusiastically involved in the transgressing phenomenon of dematerialization. The iconography that inaugurated this new dimension with geometric grids in perspective, called the Labirintos was soon destined to a specific semantic function; that is, she decided to put people inside the labyrinths. In order to accomplish this, she used photographs from printed media interacting with boxes in perspective. This resulted in solutions filled with humor and derision, as is evident in the enclosed crowds in *Middie Class & Co.* Her goal was well planned: to produce a feeling of strangeness or "decontextualisation."

Returning to Brazil in 1973, she settled down in São Paulo where she continued with her prints and multimedia, interposing the geometrical drawings in perspective over stereotyped photographic images like city views from post cards. From this resulted *Destruturas Urganas*, *Executivas* and *Brazil Today*, artist's books, albums and other publications that reflect power, bureaucracy and environmental issues. The irreverent interest of the artist did not allow the art and its system to pass unnoticed. Her performances mark her incisive participation in the alternative cultural movement of the country in the 1970's.

Regina Silveira next became involved in speculating about distortions of perspective, and produced *Anamorfis* (1979-81), a complex of prints and drawings that opened a new horizon for her. Contributing to this definition were her former works where she made explicit the projection lines to vanishing points, and the drawings of a series of works full of critical verve which she called *Jogos de Arte*. Photographing everyday objects like a pair of scissors or glasses from a certain angle and height, and overlaying several reticulars in perspective, the artist could recreate them through compressions, dilations and folds, making them an enigmatic reality. But this morphology of distortions, whose procedures were enriched in a series called *Simulacros* (1982-84), was also the result of interpretations of artificial systems of spatial constructions based on Leonardo and Duchamp's speculations, and writings by contemporary authors like Panofsky. She was impressed in particular with the deformations of the photographic images and the forms produced by the computer which were demonstrated and studied by Pirenne.

The *Simulacros*, which followed *Anamorfis*, completed the main points of reference in her work. It is a constellation of photographic works, installations and objects, always monochromatic (black over white), reverberating with each other, which she considers as "a reflection of projected shadows, materialized as visual parody of the projective codes of the linear perspective, of the theory of

shadows, of photography and of the topographic drawings." In the establishment of visual structures, based on the infraction of laws of the projection system of classical perspective, she was mostly interested in the use of viewpoints and visual angles, as she still is today.

Despite the homogeneity of all her work, which has turned to the ambiguity of perspective (little does it matter the "motives" or objects that serve as models), we should highlight along with *Simulacros* the work in *Absentia* (MD), built in a 10x20m space for the XVII Bienal de São Paulo in 1983. It was composed of monumental silhouettes from *Bottlerack* and *Bicycle Wheel* extended in oblique opposition over the floor and raised panels which enclosed the area. They were fictitious shadows that elusively parted from two absolutely empty sculpture bases, distorting and challenging the perception according to the location and distance of the viewer.

Following the *Simulacros*, Silveira produced *Inflexões* (1985-7), a series of painted cutouts used as single pieces or as elements of installation. Her elaborated drawings were transferred to tapestry and exhibited at the Gulbekian Foundation in Lisbon (1988). Mainly the conception of new and consecutive installations like *Vertice* (1988-89) and *Simile* (1988) at the Galileo Center of Madrid dynamically filled up her time. *Auditorim* (1990), presented at the Triennale of India, in New Delhi (1991), consisted of simulated rows of seats built as a virtual tri-dimensionality, but flat on the floor. Among these works is the latest silhouette designed for The Queens Museum of Art. Her research has progressed in the sense of extracting stimulus from the aspects of the surroundings where she is invited to intervene, as it happened in *Solombra* (1990) at the SESC-Pompéia in São Paulo, and recently in *Behind the Glass* (1991) at New York University's Grey Art Gallery in Greenwich Village.

If we could say that Regina's work reflects the "geometry of the absurd" and the shadows of De Chirico, it is also proper to say that elements of emotional and sensorial order, present like a memory of her past expressionism, significantly enter the hypertrophies and other alterations of her images. If she departs from geometrical grids to make parodies of the rules of perspective, she still has free choice to explore the ambiguities of perspective with a sense of humor. Withdrawing from the model, she exemplifies what Sergio Benvenuto calls "reflexion du langage."

Analogies can be made between Regina Silveira's visual configurations and those of other artists, such as Jan Dibbets and Justen Ladda; but there is no doubt about the deeply personal path that she follows is a very intense and consequent rhythm of work in the current art context.

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