

The two fires

There is a Jewish parable I like very much that has been guiding my thoughts on aesthetical issues. This parable deals with how the divine scriptures were written and reveals to us they were written with two kinds of fire: a *black fire*, that drawn the letters we think we are reading, and a *white fire*, that created the space between the letters, thus allowing us to read them. The parable continues saying we are going through a seven-thousand year cycle in which we know how to read the black fire and that, now, we are approaching a new cycle in which we will learn to read the white fire.

The idea that human reality is conceived by pairs of opposites – inner and outer, full and empty, object and subject, body and spirit, figure and background, presence and absence, light and shade and so many others – offers us a tool to perceive the fabric of a reality we know is not exhaustible in a unidirectional perspective. Merleau-Ponty dissolved the antagonistic logic implicit in such pairs when he made us see that they do not exist in spite of each other, but thanks to each other. The artifice of phenomenological perception allowed for a softer field of passage and a more generous range of reality apprehension, while the frontier between things were no longer perceived as absolutes – as Heraclitus had already pointed out – but as a flow: exchanging fields of forces and intensities. In the color green, for instance, blue allows space for yellow and vice-versa, depending on the intensity of the shade of green. Both colors are present in green, but they alternate or balance each other in their intensities in order to become another color. Or, as well, they can turn into their opposite pole, in which blue can turn green and green yellow. Each one of the poles of a pair is contained in the other. Like in a Moebius strip, there is continuity between front and back.

Beyond the fact it raises our awareness of the importance of the interdependence of apparently opposite poles, what interests me in this parable is that it introduces the idea that, even though, there is a predominance of a field over the other. Today we are able to read from the perspective of the *black fire*, but there will be a day when we will learn to read the *white fire*. What does it mean to learn to read from the perspective of the white fire? What does it mean to make such turn and pass into “the other side”? I believe we are not yet ready to answer such question, that, for me, belongs to the same level of knowing what lies beyond the black holes. We can of course speculate and suppose other possibilities, but, certainly, we will need to have another mental and reality perception structures.

A great deal of my interest for visual arts comes from the fact that from Impressionism to the most recent experiences of contemporary art – so I believe – the main purpose of art has been to inquire into the white fire. Renaissance and the general theory of perspective are the visual translation of men’s capacity of reading the black fire. With Impressionism and the systematic demolition of the classical naturalistic representation, a process begun of a displacement of the regard from a centralized stance to a more malleable one (more plastic) in which the visual arts renounced being a faithful reproduction of the outer world. Searching what is true – whose expression was no longer possible with the use of a measurement for appearance precision, but with a measurement of that which is not necessarily apparent – instead of searching verisimilitude as a guarantee of truth. No longer covered by reality, mystery (metaphysics) turned into reality’s transparency. For me, such movement represents a displacement toward the white fire.

Regina Silveira has given a unique contribution to this process. Since she is gifted with an absolutely objective and precise intelligence, instead of destructuralizing classical representation from the outside to the inside (as it has been done throughout the last 150 years of art history and the consequential succession of “isms”), her proposal is to face right at it and deconstruct it from the inside out. In other words, her process was to challenge perspective with its own laws. She took advantage of these laws to demonstrate that in its limits – at the borders of representation –, perspective creates distortions (anamorphosis) that distance it from a faithful reproduction of an outer object. Such strategy demolished the mystery of perspective and transformed it into something apparent: Regina Silveira’s work hurts perspective with the very appearance.

What came into being from this process of implosion? A broken world, filled with vertigos. This is not a metaphor. Throughout the development of her work we can observe that an exaggerated perspective creates a spatial relation where the world seems to fall and break into pieces. Many of her works are radical perspective experiences that show us that in its limit perspective disfigures reality and distorts certainties. Before full of certainties, the world is now presented to us as a mined field where the greatest presence is absence.

Regina, then, seeks to grant shape to this absence through light and shade. These two elements constitute the appearance of the visible, but do not hold material density – the same as perspective lines – but, contrary to them, they are not mental constructs but a direct apprehension of reality as apparition. Vision perceives outer reality not through a play of lines but through a play of light and shade. The artist indicates that we lack the experience – or, better saying, we must to re-experience – this direct relation with the real, in which the world is drawn before our eyes by masses of light and shade. In reality, Regina makes us perceive that they are the structures that allow us to see. This fact frees us from the need to find a truth (aimed by central perspective) and takes us closer to an experience of that which is true. If perspective supplies us with a concept of truth, light and shades allow us to experience the vision of reality as the true throb of life.

The “logos” that emerges from this process is not the fruit of an authoritarian and centralizing reason, but of poetics. And this is the point of departure from which the exhibition *LUZ ZUL* was constituted. Pieces that allow the public to come into contact with the current phase of the artist – in which she utilizes technological means as a vehicle to convey the same perplexity we experience before the forces of nature and makes us wonder about the mystery of the world – were chosen. Imagine the sensation of a sunset and the moment when we are taken by the power of its presence. The silence, the involvement and the radical experience of displacement from the fragmented structure of time immediatism and the urban order of contemporary scene. This feeling of wonder was meant to be kept. All works chosen for this exhibition were guided by this perception. Working at the junction of art and technology that Regina controls so well with outstanding delicacy and accuracy, we aimed to privilege works that translate the poetic dimension, that remit us to the moment of philosophy’s birth, when such questions throbbed intensely.

The key element of all works in display is light. Each one in its own way.* *Lunar* is a cosmic ballet where a ball moves in deep space, magnetizing our glance. This work

makes us lose awareness of plane dimension and invite us to dive into the profundity of the cosmos, creating moments of concentration on ourselves. *Pulsar* is a simple matchbox that creates a witty connection between the most banal daily activity and the wonderment of a star that magically escapes from the little box. *Double* tricks us, questioning us about the limits between material and immaterial realities and between real and virtual realities. This is the only work that makes use of shade – which is part of Regina's visual repertoire – and that, in this piece, is meant to connect these two realities of present day's man. *LUZ ZUL* interferes in the architecture, bathing the space with a blue light, announcing in the entrance the word 'luz' [light], whose inverted projection ('zul') can be read inside the building. *LUZ ZUL* deals with tautology. It refers to that that is because it is. This is the place of conviction and not of the truth. It is the place of art. With this work Regina Silveira metaphorically closes the cycle we mentioned when we referred to the two fires. The word LUZ written with light carries a power that is equal to itself and invites us to expand reality's appearance as the surface of the profundity of that which is real. With *LUZ ZUL* both kinds of fires can be understood as the structure of the unity in which one is extensive to the other: the full emptiness.

Marcio Doctors

*All questions about the works of this exhibition, the history and the concept of Regina Silveira's work can be better answered by the commented interview published in this catalog.