

EMMANUEL NASSAR

Painting

08 NOV – 05 JAN 2007

Here everything seems in construction and it's already a ruin
(Caetano Veloso)

Emmanuel Nassar is a unique artist in the Brazilian artistic scene.

Born in 1949 in Capanema, Pará – a State in the North of Brazil located at the outskirts of the Amazon River, between the dense and exotic forest and the Atlantic immensity –, Emmanuel Nassar sums up in its work a dimension that is at the same time local, national and international.

The use of an intrinsically popular imagery from his home region – the light, the colour, the objects and references to the simplicity of a precarious daily life – points out to the idea of the *genius locci*, defended by the 80's international artists as a reaction to the universalistic propositions of the Modernism. But, in spite of the apparent simplicity, of an "aesthetic of the common", there is nothing here provincial or naïf. The range of references detectable in Nassar's work reveals paradoxically erudite when one focuses, in a useless attempt of labelling it, at the apparent (or ambiguous) similarities with artistic movements so important, in Brazil and abroad, as the constructivism or the pop art. If, on one hand, the strong appeal for geometry, the flat and contrasting colour, refer to the Brazilian Neo-Concretism, , in the other hand, the convocation of the daily life objects and thematic leads to think about the proposals of the Pop Art. However, in a deliberated and clever operation, the artist perverts or at least satirizes these two inheritances, precisely through the imprecision (of the technique) and the regionalism (of the signs). As if questioning, with an ironic mood, which is the role of an erudite art, drowned in intra-systemic references, in such a weak society as his.

If we want to label it as "Pop", this will have to be considered as a "Brazilian Pop" where Hollywood's icons are replaced for Fair tents and low tech devices.

If we want to dissect the concretist reminiscences, it is better to consider his graduated architect eye, always attentive to the plan, the light, the space, as his experience as a publicity creative, skilled to find in the common things the simplest, and by so, the more efficient, ways of communication.

In spite of the critic and ironic accent – which reveals a broader interest in the social, in the here and now experience, approaching art and life –, it could seem as if the essential of Nassar's work could be summed up as a self-referential game about twentieth century art history. Nothing could be more wrong. The levels of significance and the questions posed by his work reach much further, from the semiotic universe to the political one (not in an activist or demagogic way, but as a way of thinking and comprehend the surrounding world).

In Nassar's works, whichever the materials or techniques, highlights to the immediate of sensorial perception the lyricism of the vibrant colour, the efficiency of the composition and the subtleness of the imprecise drawing. One

senses also, mainly in the canvas works, a delusional, almost metaphysic atmosphere, which proposes to the spectator a surreal charade.

Multiple layers of significance are to be revealed as long as we question the works, in a relation proportionally inverse to the layers of paint applied by the artist, as if he wanted to veil with simplicity something that is actually much more complex. Complex but not pretentious, planned but open to intuition.

This is Emmanuel Nassar, erudite and popular, designer of desdramatized metaphors of the precarious, active and ironic observer, philosopher of the simple that prefers to give the scenario and let people write the narrative.

Rita Sobreiro
November 2007