

TIAGO BAPTISTA

Um dia destes...

One of these days...

26 FEV – 17 ABR

Et in Arcadia Ego. Poussin painted twice this theme, which the second version of 1638 is the best known. Four pastors, idealized figures surround a stone tomb where they read the inscription, manifest of the transient life. By citing this icon painting of French classicism, Tiago Baptista in turn realizes the enunciation of a belief about the way one thinks and achieves the update of a historical painting.

Having had access to a draft synopsis of work done by the painter, I realized that all his efforts lead to a critical purpose of broad sociocultural lines. For Tiago Baptista, as it was for Poussin, paintings are vehicles for visualizing one's own and original poetic speeches to which the clarity of conception is a major contribution, the so called *disegno*, resulting from the balance of marriages between lyricism and reason, sensibility and intellect, suited to the representation of each given subject. Therefore, the author, by outlining a literary and critic universe of its own, continues to create dramaturgical devices that best match the drama of the statement. These, again analogous to Poussin, are characterized by creating a space in which the elements denote intended meanings. The space is almost invariably outside, dense and loaded. The landscapes do not refer either to an idealized arcadia but rather to the Portuguese countryside, often punctuated by small factories and houses of *pato bravo*. The figures are modeled directly from the contemporary universe of personal acquaintances of the author, or public figures, such as the pioneer of the *mocidade portuguesa* (a youth club during the time of Salazar's dictatorship). The actions carried out by these figures invariably refer to the subtext of thought.

It could be possible however, when continuously observing the graphic and pictorial production of Tiago Baptista, to identify another trend, this time away from Poussin, which is the apparent realism of these very elements that he chooses to represent. The author states here, through this inclusion of the prosaic, an area of conflict or tension between two reading lines; on one hand, an idealistic, eschatological and global political message, which conveys his desire for a universalist worldview and, on the other hand, an immediate landscaping, a brutal ethnography, very contemporary and compatriot, of a country itself torn between its organic and primal structure and the blind obsession of progress. This realism, this close relationship with the cultural framework mentioned above is well expressed in the pigs, the lamb of Josefa de Óbidos, the pebbles, the casual urban outfits, the drum of the *Nicolinas of Guimarães* with a hole in it. Here, in this last example, as well as in others, the artist also plays with more or less obvious sexual connotations. The grandiloquence of the proposed, and sometimes explicit, theme is also intentionally contradicted by the inclusion of popular iconography, giving it a highly ironic aspect that often overrides any consideration of classicism attributable to the images that Tiago Baptista presents. This becomes more evident after an observation of the nature of Tiago's graphic universe where this malaise appears verbatim and completely cleared of academic references. Here Nicolas Poussin, as the formal and conceptual model, gives way to Robert Crumb.

It is, however, the ubiquity of ruin, the wrecked, which turns out to be the most relevant and genuine aspect of this representation of *fin de fête*, this inability to form a teleological discourse, which Tiago Baptista's painting *intends* to present. I say intend because I am convinced that it is not from an explicit program that one makes a painting. The quality of an image is constituted as an ability to convey a sense of direction completely independent of what is explicitly represented in it. In the painting of Tiago Baptista the explicit is doubled by the implicit, in a fortunate pleonasm. Somehow the programs that the author intends to follow in carrying out each of his paintings and they alone wanting to convey this sense of crisis or cataclysm, are made irrelevant by the sensitive material that is presented here, ie, it is *in what* emanates from the elements, in the mediated pictorial effect as sensitive material, where the

constant grief of these images can be felt. The colors are opaque and loaded and the shapes mashed such as bodies of clay. This sense of mourning here works similarly to a Courbet where this weight feels in almost every work. Through this, one can also catch a glimpse of the enormous potential of this metaphorical work; the diffuse narrative that comes out in the paintings of Tiago Baptista is subconscious and it's right here where it gets its power from, the power of being able to establish itself as a kind of emotional and intimate *Trauerspiel*, pre-emergent and revolutionary.

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