

**GABRIELA MACHADO**  
**REVER**  
**30 MAI – 6 JUL 2013**

Gabriela Machado - *flowers and leaves before/ after*  
(*between Lilliputians and Gulliver*)

"All the angels are terrible. And, yet, poor me, I sing to them..."  
(Rainer Maria Rilke, "Elegia II", *Elegies of Duíno / Sonnets to Orpheus*)

"...A language of deflowering flourishes, an inauguration of utterances,  
Something as old as walking,  
These blurtings out of language."  
(Manoel de Barros, "Portrait Nearly Erased where you can See Absolutely Nothing.")

"...other wounds spread suddenly to the fulcrum of memory,  
other nights thrust themselves upon me  
flowers and panic took root in my body..."  
(Al Berto, "Othe Wounds", *Vigílias*)

2 years later, I return to Gabriela Machado's *flowers and leaves [before]*. During this intervening period, I was able to visit her studio in the Botanical Garden neighbourhood of Rio de Janeiro. On a somewhat overcast, drizzly day, the plants and flowers on the small interior patio of the studio jostled with the drawings and paintings of this *Carioca* artist. In the 18th century, David Hume appreciated the discipline and wisdom of painters when he acknowledged their (almost exclusive) legitimacy to define the "norms of taste". These guidelines instructed the public in knowledge and for the purpose of exercising value judgments - enunciating and applying an aesthetic axiology. He regarded creators as guides in the formation of taste, designating them *par excellence*. To these he added the aesthetes, the people closest to them, which is to say, he stressed the need for there to be a proximity to artists and to understand their works correctly. In practice, living with artists and authors, this approximation is accepted, with pleasure and the intention of elaborating precise ideas about their thoughts and productions. Today, Hume's ideas prevail in the conceptual field and remain relevant.

Gabriela Machado's travels to Lisbon - the most recent in 2011 - have taken place for years, providing her with a highly realistic and intimate knowledge of the city and, in particular, the historical and central areas of the city which she has traversed.

Absorbing and elaborating the images of flowers, trees and other sparse vegetation in the city, those species which populate the surroundings and exterior of her studio in Rio, the artist has brought new morphologies "within the walls", adding the interest of giving them depth and form.

The small paintings displayed in 3+1 Arte Contemporânea, in her own words, "were the product of exhaustion", as they resulted from a taxing process of elaboration, where the layers of paint, in addition to giving them volume, shape the duration and passing of time. The paintings are both saturated with themselves and the paint of history - the episodes and situations, I assume, experienced by their author. The initial matrix involved an accumulation which gave density to the iconography, populating it with convergent semantic content. The act of bending over a surface, in a painstaking process which involves the attention of both hand and body, acquired physicality in the three-dimensional process which we is now revealed.

The person of the artist is a kind of Gulliver who tenderly faces his almost Lilliputian creations but which are possessed of an incredible energy and salute the chromatic emotions, to the extent that they spill over and leave themselves so that they may be granted (accorded) stature and balance, in order to stand up and remain in space of their own accord. The flowers and leaves are creatures. The density of the colour was achieved by the sensitivity of the artist. They populate the walls, appropriating time and staying. They endure; they are not ephemeral, contradicting the precariousness of life itself. They establish themselves. The small porcelain sculptures (clay, pigment and enamel) acquire consciousness and install themselves. These small scale pieces are worked on for 8 months:

"...they are works which emerge from the same gaze as my painting, they are sculptures which result from the act of doing, of observation and mainly of curiosity about the material, my work occurs largely as a result of what stimulates my gaze and curiosity." (Gabriela Machado, unpublished excerpt, 28th May 2013)

In the Lisbon exhibition, the pieces are arranged in an almost intimist random display, which demands mental sharpness and prolonged attention, and seduces the feelings. The wooden bases, where they are fixed, are incorporated into the respective sculptures, erecting a whole converted into an indissoluble quality. Each of the wooden pieces, with its rough appearance, was carefully chosen, as if previously destined to belong to that same sculpture and to define it. In some cases, the pieces of wood appear to be almost geometric, piled up and consigned to the essence of the pedestal. They form statues, accentuating the brightness, whiteness or colourfulness of the modelled pieces.

In (the history of) European art, there is a recurrence, in different styles and periods, of the theme of sculpted flowers, celebrating a pregnant taste and aesthetic. Remember, for example, the porcelain flowers of the Spain of the 18th century. Their detailed, voluminous modelling, the rigorous narrowness of their contours and details, in their technical and perfectionist closure, function in a way which is almost diametrically opposed to the works exhibited here. The modelled leaves, flowers and stalks are somehow picturesque, challenging the definition of taste imposed by other normative fixations.

The contorted flora relate to the pulsing tension which Gabriela Machado confers on her paintings, through brushstrokes and plasterings of oil. These are thick, dense brushstrokes, applied with an irrevocable decisiveness, and thus establish a new direction for her artistic path. The embodied morphologies expand an intentionality which navigates between typologies of the baroque and the informalism of some small anthropomorphic models (studies), in plaster, by Rodin or Camille Claudel. They oscillate between technical security and the autonomy of forming shapes - patenting a "directed" hybridism. Taking as a starting point, elements of the visible and knowable world, the author accedes to a territory where the real is dominated by the personal imagination, under the auspices of intuition and desire. To establish these pieces in spiritual convulsions, the paste was neither stretched out nor flattened. It was previously concentrated, kneaded by hand (in an act of possession), witnessing tensions and balances, ordered in accordance with the rhythm of ideas, of *praxis* and *poiésis*.

Increasingly, looking at the sculptures, the similarity of what has already occurred when contemplating the paintings, in some of the forms, the designs form little beings, anxious to protect their soul *in extremis*. Flowers and fruits are words which form part of phrases in various poetic compilations by Rainer Maria Rilke. As they sprout in the earth and seek to establish themselves in the earth:

*"The diversity of the shapes/of their ancient abandonment is such/that it is only, during some brief periods/oh, nature/that we are able to keep up with you."* (R.M. Rilke, *Fruits and Appointments*)

The painted and sculpted flowers collectively constitute a miniature garden and represent a meticulous landscape. An imaginary garden - something Lilliputian (if you like...), where they ask which of them do you want to provide a home for.

Maria de Fátima Lambert  
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