

Shared Poetics / Expanded Poetics ● Guilherme Bueno

The “public” works of Rosana Ricalde and Felipe Barbosa pose an immediate question: What is the place of art?

The question may be answered in a hasty fashion, by saying that art’s place is the city, understanding the latter not only as a support – much as it is decisively relevant in the works of these artists – but, from a historical point of view, as its space par excellence. However, this statement still not guarantee a point of stability. “The” city does not exist in an absolute sense. What does exist are paradigms, the contexts and the crossroads: the Florence of Brunelleschi, the Paris of 1789, of the Commune of 1871, of may 1968; the New York of Fitzgerald and jazz period, of the forties and fifties, of 2001; Brazilia; the Ville Radieuse of Le Corbusier; the city of futurists... the examples are interminable.

Contemporary experience adds meaning to the city as support by questioning the way in which it is lived; thus, a certain modern practices are approached, those that are circumscribed by the notion of the specialization of the medium, as well as their simultaneous counterpart, the synthesis

anticipated by constructivist systems or Dadaist actions. There is a double play. Initially, the immersion in the expanded object: rather than the antithesis between the subject and the object, between complementary but irreconcilable entities, the city is considered as a “work”, the transit between the constraints of personal limits and the exteriority in relation to the “other”.

The interventions of Ricalde and Barbosa bring two elements familiar to the city: “anonymity” and surprise. The “anonymity” of the emergence of a work which is neither an individual nor a divisible product, but the confluence (and not the juxtaposition) of experiences. It is about proposing situations – rather than constructing objects – organized in accordance with the possibility of poetic expansion between two artists. It is the work of a “third author” established by a logic that incorporates the elements of their respective individual interests, and generates as many new common ones.

The works propose yet another sort of “anonymity”. The work is made and exhibited; it meddles in the city, infiltrates a mass of buildings or an architectural detail. In this exact moment it, paradoxically, stops being just another passer-by and crosses the city like a dandy, a voluntary poetic invention which lives and asserts itself through its opposite – a world entirely and intentionally grey and anaesthetic – and makes of the unexpected an occasion for rediscovery and astonishment, a dynamic amazement, mind you and, it might even sometimes be said, for the poetic reconstruction of the subject.

The poetics inserted there sometimes reveal the ephemeral and transitory nature of the pace of business, of the little discoveries, the unexpected poetic accidents, like those already announced by Baudelaire and the dandyism of the nineteenth century. On the other hand, these actions are in some way dandy-objects, dandy-situations, insofar as they claim an aesthetic experience radically opposed to bourgeois comfort, to the regularity of the preciously efficient and productive action; also because, like those nineteenth-century personalities, they are based on the adoption of a behavioural practice that is deliberately urbane and contrary to pragmatism. Rather than a rediscovery, they presuppose the reinvention, the re-foundation of the city as a qualitative experience of an amoral conscience.

Thus, “the” privileged author for “the” ideal city does not exist; neither is there a correct, exclusive point of view – at least since cubism – given that the city, like an organism, lives so long as its pulse is beating, while there is no absolute repose or inaction [death]. Looking at a few of the works of the “couple”: the water mirror at the Palácio das Artes [Belo Horizonte, Minas Gerais] is transformed by filling it with bottles of mineral water, which may only be seen at the moment of walking on the ramp that gives access to the building. First of all, we note the substitution of

the static subject, the motionless spectator; the work requires [and in this case, it would be valid to refer, for the sake of comparison, to the city of Rodchenko, of Moholy-Nagy, Mendelsohn, of Umbo, among others] of the subject both movement and, as a consequence, the change of his habitual point of view, contemplative, in reality ideal and fictitious. Nevertheless, in addition, it is not only this transposition of visual devices that makes us aware of the confrontation with the city to which we relate. There is also a process of translation of quotidian metaphors inherent to its circulation; the street vendor, the safekeeping of things of value [just like the bottle contains water and, protecting it from the world, transforms it into a value, the museum does the same with the work of art], and so on.

Two the artists' more recent works, the first made in Fortaleza, and the second in Madrid, present another variation of their investigations. In the case of work in Ceará, it consisted of a game of ticktacktoe in the middle of a street crossing, while in Spain, it was a game of checkers on a little traffic island separating two parallel lanes. On these two occasions, the work does not merely explore the unexpectedness of the fact which, as we might imagine, escapes the mentality of the authority regulating movement, traffic, in a word – the city. The work denies the every-day, justifiable and immediately applied usufruct of space, selecting the exact place, the unique point in which interstices of "mobile", erratic vital experience are recognized, small and volatile in the macro vision of the city. Putting it differently, these incursions contain the discovery of other surprises, not on the plane of their contexts or characters, but in the fact that, for its survival, the city requires the determination of non-sites, of blind spots, for its order to be assured in the punctuation of little chaotic moments. It is not a matter of congestion, floods or any similar catastrophe; rather, it is about zones of perplexity, of rationalized indefiniteness, which – were it possible to stop in them – would serve to do absolutely nothing. Curiously, however, by means of this device of a game which increases the tension inherent in the utilitarian value and the use of the urban network, the projects of Ricalde and Barbosa go to the root of a series of coordinates present since the foundation of the industrial city and still emblematic today, comfortably accommodated in the construction of our imaginary urban universe, such as, for instance, the implantation of recreational areas, fairgrounds, in sum, "civilized" mechanisms of expansion and momentary idyllic compensation. What makes these works provocative is their refusal to take on an "acceptable" urbanistic en or to offer themselves as moments of pacifying recreational relaxation. It is a provocation which, nevertheless, does not end in a nihilistic self-mortification, but in the spontaneous irony of a popular joke or of an urban legend which, after all, have a positive vitality open to the world. This is not about games – and given our references to modernity. Schillerian games; the unforeseeable nature of their results goes beyond the delimiting circumscription of the rules; it elicits disconcerting and instigating strategies and effects, radically defiant and, why not? Innovative.