

The collector and the cartographer ● Marisa Flórido

*I suspect, however, that I wasn't very capable of thinking. To think is to forget differences, to generalize, to abstract. Jorge Luis Borges Funes, **the Memorious***

Why is it this and not that small object which seduces the collector in the brief instant in which, for the first time, the eyes run curiously through its surface? The delicate strangeness, its bizarre outlines, its prodigious features... Maybe a small spark which shines rapidly, but which highlights it amongst the other things that circulate distractively through the denseness of the world. Or is it its timid avoidness, almost unnoticeable, which attracts its affection?

The collector takes the object away from its vital orbit, from its daily use and prosaic prescription. Protects it amongst others in a series: surrounds it in his meticulous passion, precise, methodical. Protects it in a new order. Not always does the relationship that this reunion of objects consume – objects that are at times distant and foreign amongst each other – result clear to the one, which observes its accurate operation. A sort of silence is built up around each object, which

is kidnapped from the world: a space, which is not filled, saved due to the proximity to others, which, with him, integrate the collection. Saved maybe by the actual act of collecting: a series that must organize, classify, conserve and memorize. But forgetting is necessary in this kidnapping which takes the object from the world and protects it in its memory.

Cabinets of curiosity and galleries of prodigies and of art are precursors of the museum. Maybe we can find, in the Renaissance, the more explicit genealogies of this phenomenon of Occidental culture: the collection – the accumulation and classification of what is strange in one unit, in a private totality. Bizarre objects would scintillate then in precious show windows: many brought from the great conquests of the navigations, widening territorial and ethnic frontiers, demanding increasingly precise cartographies.

And here we find another character of this tale: the cartographer. Like the act of collecting, the one of mapping demands an abstraction and a reservation. The collector accumulates objects, the cartographer brings together information. But if the collection abstracts the object from its ordinary place in order to introduce it to a particular system, the map represents, in one plan, information referential to the area of its location.

A fortune of writing, cartography describes the visions of a time, of its physical space as well as of the world in general. Its abstraction, altogether, is of another species: the lines that are drawn over the two-dimensional surface of the map are abstract borders in the flesh of the world, plotted by conflicts of diverse natures. The territorial limits that are traced over the plane have a temporal dimension, a historical profoundness. A history of disputes, power, appropriations. A third dimension that is not the one of pictorial perspective. Powers control the fragments: identities of the language, of customs and of culture are agglomerated. Private collections which construct the fictions of totality and which exclude the other foreigner from its circumscribed spaces. Maps codify the space, nominate the land, but don't decipher it. They do not undo the shunting lines between the abstraction of the codes and the concrete natures of existence.

The objects that Felipe Barbosa collects are not rare or singular. The artist does not collect to insert them in a series. On the contrary, they are small unities produced in series that exhale an anonymous phantasmagory of the copy that its brief and utile life cycle lived and now rests around, mistaken in the indifference of the debris, in the purgatory of the streets. They are traces of the opulence, of the culture of accumulation, of the excess and of the waste: subway tickets, bottle tops which have been picked up in the cities in which he remains even if only for a couple of days, hours or instants: Rio de Janeiro, Fortaleza, Madrid, Paris... Fragments that already

inhabit the universe of the leftovers and of what has been forgotten: it is exactly their residual and repeated condition that attracts him.

The small objects rescued by the artist trace, in turn, other cartographies: the tickets outline over the support of the screen the subterranean labyrinth of the subway, the drawing which occults itself from the surface of the cities. Each ticket does not remain from being an indicative sign, breaking the surface of the screen in distinct memories: a brief effort is enough for us to imagine the hands which picked them up, the paths which it served, the encounters which they perhaps enabled. Fragments which, if at first seemed to want to rescue the continuous aspects of time and space, do not free us from the squizofrenic condition of contemporary life. Allude to the profoundness of various times and spaces, and other archeological layers. They do not return the organic temporality of History and its linear cycle of casualties, the identity of the individual, the unity of the space, the contiguity of language. Its strange strategy emphasizes the collapse, the dubiety of the signs and the lapses of meaning: highlights the discontinuities. The maps which result do not return us back to a symbolic whole, to the intuition of an absolute sense: the juxtaposition of fragments is allegoric, dispersive, its meaning remains incomplete and oscillating.

The bottle tops, in turn, fight for the territories of the chassi. A unity of each brand deposited aleatorally over the plane initiates the expansion of the spheres of consuming. In concentric circles, they rival the frontiers of the beer and soda brands consumed in the occasion of the artist's stay in a city. The time of filling up the picture is confused with the duration of his stay there. They do not correspond to the exact place where they rested forgotten. Neither could they: these disappeared in the deterritorialized flux of globalized economy. An abstraction, more violent than that of that collection and of cartography, instaures itself: everything is equaled in the field of merchandising, in a system of trades, in the bare and memoryless surfaces of consuming.

Or previously, the maps of the artist reveal its paradoxes: memory has also been globalized, commercialized in the cultural industry of the West. Where to place the responsibility of the collective acts, the political exercise of memory? The world turns into a museum, the cities vindicate their private cabinets, compete between each other for the prestige of keeping their collections.

We could map the genealogies of the *Maps* of Felipe Barbosa: Duchamp would parody with the ready-made operation of the collector – he would take out an object from its daily context in order to insert it in the collection of Art and in this way desecrate its system. To the silence exhaled by this subtraction, the artist would aggregate the name Art. But we are closer to the pop

irony and its incursion over the domain of the series: the maps of the artist do not give back the obsessive existence of modern painting, like a closed totality and self-referential.

Well, didn't abstract painting, with its formalist speculations, have its private collection of fictions? - The assertion of the two-dimensional space as an undoubtable identity of painting, the vindication of time as an exceptional moment of the aesthetic reception that occurs in the blissful encounter with the object of art. A time without duration, compressed in an instant that promised the suspension of its irreversible flux. An immediate, which violated and cheated time itself.

Surface here is not the ontological plane of the painting, maybe the spectral unenchantment of the indifferenciation of the series and the bare uniformity of globalization. Time is neither the immediate of the aesthetic ecstasy: this is diluted and multiplies itself in the allusion of the rapid and mundane pleasures of a cold drink. Brief memories. How then not to equally doubt the present? Of the reinvidication of what is now in the duration of the experience? The intensified present is involved to the volatile nature of merchandise; and the present, to the immediate nature of consuming.

I suspect, after all, that the passion of the archivist has its own mechanics, a systematization of obsessions, a fixation of thought to the object to which he addresses non-stop – passion has its specific rationality.

I suspect, after all, that the method of the cartographer wants to map what is characteristic of the memory, of the temporality and of the current area, which does not succumb indifferent to the easy abstractions of consuming. Reason has its specific passion. Because of this it is necessary to think other times and areas, another practice of memory and forgetting. Other abstractions are necessary due to this.