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BIENAL 10

# MENSAGENS DE UMA NOVA AMÉRICA



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fério norte. A relação metafórica que a obra de Tebet estabelece com a exposição *A Poeira e o Mundo dos Objetos* é fundamental para entendermos as conexões entre espaço e tempo e desejos com a política da produtividade quando redimensionada nos patamares das imbricações existenciais da imagem. Essas imagens discretas de constelações poderiam parecer ingenuas se não fosse sua abordagem política do espaço, escondida em uma disfarçada manifestação poética que a imensidão do cosmos e seus mistérios muitas vezes dissimula. Tebet introduz no processo de formalização uma consistente intervenção na ideologia da interpretação do cosmos a partir da visão, assinalando uma desconfortável perspectiva segregacionista que surge como uma fatalidade, mas que coincide com a dimensão política da visibilidade hegemônica do Norte. Recorrendo a representações pictóricas que se caracterizam por uma visão crítica do universo interestelar, essas pinturas de Tiago Tebet alertam para um possível processo discriminatório do olhar, ao mesmo tempo em que oferecem uma possibilidade de repensarmos a condição de subalternidade que nos foi facultada pela sicuayá de sulistas, mas que merece consideração com vistas a produzir uma condição de alteridade para além da prostração passiva diante dos variados mecanismos de subordinação.

Uma escultura de gesso do artista Saint Clair Cemin (1951), *Sem Palavras* (2006), consiste numa figura vertical, aparentemente um fantasma coberto por um lençol. Um fio vermelho parte do que seria uma mão encoberta da figura em direção ao espaço. O formalismo da figura contrasta com expansão dada por este fio que delimita um espaço em torno da figura e sua ocupação. O drapeado invoca as relações com a estatuária e sua escala, um tanto quanto mediana, que lhe atribui um caráter surrealista que se manifesta com força de tempos em tempos na obra do artista. Sua relação com o Surrealismo não é de emulação, mas, como em toda a obra de Saint Clair Cemin, uma referência crítica às outras tradições artísticas e a história da arte, um procedimento recorrente em sua produção. Esse caráter surrealista aparece também em *Maman*, outra obra de sua autoria induzida em *Modernismo em Parallaxe*. *Sem Palavras* alude a mudez de uma figura fantasma, que se conecta ao mundo por meio de um fio vermelho, única matéria que lhe parece real e, em paralelo, ironiza a condição da escultura como portadora de uma mensagem prescritiva. Aquilo que dá forma a escultura é ao mesmo tempo um lençol de gesso, que supostamente envolve uma estrutura sem corpo, um espectro, como se o artista estivesse a nos falar do "fantasma" da própria escultura. O gesso de que é feita a obra alude às cópias de estatuária, que por séculos rondaram museus e ainda assim o fazem, servindo como réplicas de seus originais e alimentando o desejo fetichista da história da arte e da academia. Essa obra é, afinal, pó que toma forma na eminência de não resistir ao manuseio e as intempéries, apesar do "corpo" sólido de que se constitui. Contente e contido são discrepantes, pois se o gesso gera resistência na interioridade do corpo, as arestas que ele forma são frágeis. Assim, como forma de existir no espaço, esta figura parece se conectar ao mundo "por um fio," mostrando que a escultura existe a partir da modernidade, hoje em uma zona de resistência, entre a matéria que lhe dá forma e sua própria assombração histórica.

Estas obras de Cemin são também essencialmente híbridas e, por isso, transitam entre o excesso do barroco e a tradição pura do formalismo moderno.

A obra de Lucas Simões (1980), *Engessados* (2014), é igualmente uma série de formas em gesso, remontando a parte interna das dobras dos bichos de Lygia Clark, reproduzidas pelo seu negativo. As peças são exibidas sobre uma mesa abrasiva e, ao sofrerem manipulação, vão se desgastando e transformando-se em poeira, resultando em seu completo desaparecimento. O caráter participativo da obra promove uma crítica a museologização da produção artística, especialmente no caso de Lygia Clark. Entretanto essa "interioridade" da obra de Lygia, parte dessa vocação para construir a forma, não é aqui apenas uma reprodução formal do negativo que seus *Bichos* demonstram. Trata-se de uma investigação da interioridade sob a perspectiva do congelamento do movimento, levando o campo da experiência a uma relação de perda progressiva pelo desgaste e a consciência de sua efemeridade. Assim, *Engessados* deixam de estar conformados ao, igualmente, "congelamento" museológico, e pelas mãos do espectador transformam-se eles mesmos em pó, numa manifestação metafórica que redefine a condição material dessa obra, uma vez que seu caráter participativo é a razão de seu próprio desaparecimento.

A pintura que provém da cerra possui uma tradição considerável no Brasil, principalmente a partir da obra de Manfredo de Souza Netto (1947), que nos anos 1980 começou a trabalhar com pigmentos terrosos que ele mesmo fabrica,<sup>182</sup> sobretudo com cerras do estado de Minas Gerais. Não por outra razão, a predominância de pigmentos vermelhos e ocres fez de sua pintura de formas geométricas uma significativa contribuição para o campo da pintura. A experiência da cor toma um outro rumo quando estas obras ingressam no universo da pintura canônica, também porque elas possuem algo de artesanal, atribuição que lhe é dada justamente pela feitura desses pigmentos e pela configuração do suporte com madeira natural em formas irregulares. A pintura torna-se uma estrutura incorporada ao seu próprio corpo, exacerbando as investigações que já ocorriam em torno do suporte desde os inícios dos anos 1960, principalmente com a obra dos artistas ligados ao *Supports-Surfaces* na França (1969-1972) e que ganha aqui um aspecto local de relevância. As investigações em torno do primitivo, que aparecem na obra de Souza Netto sem a preocupação com os efeitos simbólicos do impacto regional, levam o artista a contribuir de maneira mais significativa com uma tradição pictórica que ainda está para ser reconhecida como relevante diante da pintura canônica brasileira. É significativo que o artista tenha realizado o questionamento do suporte da pintura através de uma estrutura de caráter específico como a forquilha, uma forma bifurcada que constitui uma interioridade e que é transformada nos limites da pintura, mas sempre com uma abertura para fora. Essa geografia da superfície novamente indica que a experiência que o artista estava

182. Esta frase do artista descreve em sentimentos o procedimento de feitura dos pigmentos: "Agora, é a montanha triturada, a rocha moída, o barro peneirado, tomados como matéria pictórica para a construção da tela." Manfredo de Souza Netto, *Forquilhas*, julho de 1982.

and impregnates in the landscape, the house, and its objects, leaving marks on the wall of visible absences, transformed in images, as if on the surface of a canvas. The artist already had produced a work with pigment for the 5<sup>th</sup> Mercosul Biennial, titled *A Medida do Impossível* [As Far as Impossible] (2005),<sup>181</sup> a performance in which five naked women blew red pigment in a white space, like a gallery, built especially for the performance. That work established a connection with the work *Desvio para o Vermelho: Impregnação, Entorno, Desvio* [Red Shift: Impregnation, Environment, Shift] (1967), by Cildo Meirelles. With *Desvio Para o Vermelho*, the artist critically entered the symbolic economy of the monochrome, by generating a contamination of the domestic environment by the color red (furniture, paintings, objects, floor, etc.), which unbalances perception and activates the senses. Its political connections cross the vast arch of conceptual structuring of the work of art, since we begin to deal with the exhibition space through the work, once it becomes a self-referential process, in which paintings and objects become, themselves, objects of art in a fictional “gallery.” Cildo’s installation makes evident, through the contamination of red, an allusion to blood, which assumes a political symbolism, since the work was produced in the heydays of the Brazilian dictatorial regime. Niura Bellavinha’s *A Medida do Possível*, on the other hand, establishes a genealogical line in relation to its peers and the artistic production itself, since when the pigment invades and contaminates completely this space, which was built for the performance, a replica of the “white cube.” It is now crossed by a gender attribution – as this performance is made by women who blow this pigment and, through blowing, wind, and breath, throw towards the space the pigment that was contained in these white dishes.

Little by little, the women are, themselves, contaminated by the color and, somehow, become motifs of the painting, remaking the route in the time of a vast trajectory of female nudes in academic painting and posterior occasions, now, however, through a critic perspective. The objectifying of women through an occurrence of gender is now themed and reappears in her new work, through the affective and domestic spaces of *NhaNhá*, where dust corrodes and contaminates the space, creating an asphyxia that unwillingly enters the body (eyes and nose) and removes sight. This occasional penetration of the red soul and its familiarity with blood flow, gives her production a renewed feminist aspect for Brazilian art. Another installation by Niura Belavinha that was included here, is *ARTICULADO\_Guignard, iTa LiTica Barroca* (2000-2015), which proposes a perspective of the cosmic fluids to think about the painting that is made by blowing over the canvases the cosmic dust resulted from crushed meteorites, and them transformed in pigments. The artist blew dust over images and the wall where they were displayed. Fragments of this cosmic dust accumulated on the floor next to the wall. If, in *NhaNhá* (2014), the artist worked with dust from the earth, in this work she uses dust from elsewhere in the universe. The work is completed with three meteorite fragments exposed close to two photographs of hands holding a meteorite and dust from the same material.

Another allusion to cosmic dust appears in two works by Tiago Tebet (1986), *Variações para o Cruzeiro do Sul* [Variations for the Southern Cross] (2015) and *Cruzeiro do Sul* [Southern Cross] (2015),

181. The work was included in the exhibition *A Persistência da Pintura* [The Persistence of Painting], one of the four segments of the 5<sup>th</sup> Mercosul Biennial, which occurred from September 30 to December 4, 2005, in Porto Alegre. Images of the work and the text by Paulo Sérgio Duarte regarding it can be found in catalogue of the exhibition with the same title, p. 136-137. See also, on that catalogue, my text *A Pintura Como Ela É* [Painting as it is], a concise analysis of the transformations of painting from the paintings exhibited on that Biennial, o. 19-29. Paulo Sérgio Duarte (Org.) *A Persistência da Pintura – Histórias da Arte e do Espaço*, book 4, Porto Alegre, Mercosul Biennial of Visual Arts Foundation, 2005.

included here. As known, the universe and its galaxies produce a vast amount of fragments that travel through space and reach the earth in a daily basis. Tebet’s works, from his series *Constelações no Mato* [Constellations in the Forest], of which these paintings are part, deal, under a sociopolitical perspective, with the invisibility of the South Hemisphere to the North Hemisphere. The metaphoric relation that Tebet’s work establishes with the exhibition *The Dust and the World of Objects* is essential for us to understand the relations between space and time, and from both with the policy of productivity, when resized on the levels of the existential relations of the image. These discrete constellation images could seem naïve, if not for the political approach to space, hidden in a disguised poetic expression that the immensity of the cosmos and its mysteries often dissimulates. Tebet introduces in the process of formalization a conscious intervention in the cosmos interpretation ideology through sight, marking an uncomfortable segregationist perspective, that emerges as a fatality, albeit coinciding with the political dimension of the hegemonic visibility of the North. Resorting to pictorial representations characterized by a critical vision of the interstellar universe, these paintings by Tiago Tebet warn of a possible discriminatory process of sight, at the same time they enable the possibility for us to rethink the condition of subalternity that was forced by our southern condition, but that deserves consideration with the objective of producing a condition of alterity for beyond the passive prostration before the different mechanisms of subordination.

A plaster sculpture by artist Saint Clair Cemin (1951), *Sem Palavras* [Whithout Words] (2006), consists in a vertical figure, apparently a ghost covered by a blanket. A red thread emerges from what should be the figure’s hidden hand towards space. The formalism of the figure contrasts with the expansion given by this thread that limits a space surrounding the figure and its occupation. The drapery invokes relations with statuary and its scale, somewhat medium, which gives it a surrealist quality, fiercely expressed from time to time in the artist’s work. His relation with Surrealism is not an emulation, but, as in all works by Saint Clair Cemin, a critic reference to other artistic traditions and art history, a recurring procedure in his production. This Surrealist aspect also appears on *Maman*, another work by the same artist included in *Modernism in Parallax*. *Sem Palavras* refers to the muteness of a ghostly figure, which is connected to the world through a red thread, the only material which seems real to it and, in parallel, ironizes the condition of the sculpture as the owner of a prescriptive message. What gives shape to the sculpture is, at the same time, a sheet of plaster, which supposedly involves a bodiless structure, a specter, as if the artist was talking of the “ghost” of his own sculpture. The plaster in which the work is made alludes to statuary copies, which during centuries roamed museums and still do, serving as replicas of their originals and feeding from the fetishist desire of art history and academia. This work is, after all, dust that takes shape in the eminence of notwithstanding manipulation and weather, despite its constituted solid “body.” Content and content are discrepant, because if plaster generates resistance in the interiority of the body, the corners it forms are fragile. Thus, as a form of existing in space, this figure seems to connect to the world “by a thread,” showing that sculpture exists from modernity, today in a resistance zone, between the material that shapes it and its own historical ghost. These works by Cemin are also essentially hybrid and, for that reason, transit between the excess of the Baroque and the pure tradition of modern formalism.

The work of Lucas Simões (1980), *Engessados* [Plastered] (2014), is equally a series of plaster forms, referring to the internal part of the folds in Lygia Clark’s *Bichos* [Animals], reproduced from their nega-

tives. The pieces are exhibited over an abrasive table and, when manipulated, suffer abrasion and become dust, resulting in their complete disappearance. The participatory aspect of the work promotes a critic to the *museologization* of the artistic production, especially in the case of Lygia Clark. However, this “interiority” of Lygia’s work, part of this vocation to build form, is not here just a formal reproduction of the negative demonstrated by her *Bichos*. It is an investigation of the interiority under the perspective of the freezing of movement, taking the experience field to a relation of progressive loss through the abrasion and awareness of its ephemerality. Therefore, *Engessados* cease to be conformed, equally, to the museological “freezing,” and by the hands of the viewer become dust themselves, in a metaphoric expression that redefines the material condition of this work, since its participatory aspect is the reason of its own disappearance.

The painting that comes from the earth has a considerable tradition in Brazil, especially on the work of Manfredo de Souza-netto (1947), who in the 1980s began to work with earthy pigments, which he fabricates,<sup>182</sup> mainly from earth from the state of Minas Gerais. Not for other reason, the predominance of red and ochre pigments turned his paintings of geometric shapes into a meaningful contribution to the field of painting. The experience of color takes another direction when these works enter the universe of canonic painting, also because they feature something artisanal, an attribution given to them precisely for the making of these pigments and for the configuration of the support with natural wood and irregular shapes. The painting becomes a structure incorporated to its own body, exacerbating the research that already occurred around the support since the early 1960s, especially with the work of artists connected to the *Supports-Surfaces* in France (1969-1972) and that gains, here, a local aspect of relevance. The investigations surrounding the primitive, which appear in the work of Souza-netto without the preoccupation with the symbolic effects of the local impact, cause the artist to contribute more significantly with a pictorial tradition that still lacks recognition as relevant before the Brazilian canonical painting. It is meaningful that the artist questioned the support of painting through a specific structure such as the forked rod, a bifurcated shape that constitutes an interiority that is transformed on the limits of the painting, but always with an opening to the outside. This geography of the surface, again, indicates that the experience the artist was trying to impose to painting and its procedures was its projection beyond its frontiers, taking into account the generational occurrences of the form that placed it always on the physical limits of an experience of portraiture or landscape (vertical, or horizontal). The connection of the artist’s work with the Brazilian Neo-Concrete movement was never explored further. However, his relation with the work of Willys de Castro, especially his *Objetos Ativos* [Active Objects], made on the 1950s, and with the works of Lygia Clark and Hélio Oiticica deserve further research.

The direct reference to painting and its pigments through dust appears in the work of Karin Lambrecht, *Staub (Pó)* (2014). The painting relates to earth and pigments, since, in the 1980s, she worked with the transformations of painting when submitted to time and mixed, in some of her paintings, earth and paints such as enamel – to incompatible elements –, producing near alchemical transformations on the canvas’ surface by working with water soluble pigments and other materials that did not mix. This caused a reaction that became paint itself.

182. A statement by the artist describes, through feelings, his of pigment manufacture procedure: “Now, the mountain is crushed, the rock is milled, the clay is sifted, transformed in pictorial material for the construction of the canvas.” Manfredo de Souza-netto, *Forquilhas*, July, 1982.

Two works from this series were included in the exhibition *Marginália of the Form*, and I would particularly like to mention one of them, *Anita Ooba: de Anita para Ooba* [Anita Ooba: From Anita to Ooba] (1985). Influenced by the impressionist tradition and the investigations on the material reality of the painting, including support, the artist’s production gained an exacerbated expression of the support and the planar dimension of the painting, in the series of four works she presented at the 19<sup>th</sup> *São Paulo International Biennial*, in 1987,<sup>183</sup> where the plane of the painting projects outside it and gains space. Thus, the work maintains a connection with the surface of the canvas attached to the wall, which seems to want to detach itself from its condition of planarity, from which painting could never abdicate without the risk of ceasing to be painting. In these works, the artist deepened even further the use of organic materials, such as earth and pure pigments.<sup>184</sup>

The archeological expeditions and the investigations about what is found on earth acquire another dimension in the works of Walterio Iraheta (1968), with *Exhumación* [Exhumation] (2006) e *Encontrados* [Found], from the series *Mis pies son mis alas* [My Feet are my Wings] (2007). Iraheta’s works refer to collective memory and social trauma in Guatemala. *Mis pies son mis alas* consists in a series of photographs that transits, with considerable tension, between a morbid fetishist relation to surrealism and its references in art history. The formal organization and the sense of order from the photographs point to the same direction, as if for a symbolic route towards death, conferring it an even more impressive dimension, by its still-life aspect that alludes to the disappearance of individuals from the images of objects they owned. In 2006, the artist participated in the exhumation of victims from Guatemala’s civil war, in the zone of Rabinal, Baja-rapaz, which occurred between 1960 and 1996. The reality referred by the photographs refers to archeological excavations, dealing with the history of dictatorships in Latin America and their consequences, but also the human condition before the tragedy and the crimes against humanity that do not cease to occur. Unlike archeological excavations of sites from ancient times, which are also permeated by a feeling of excitement and discovery, the recent history to which these excavations are connected, brings us closer to the facts, as the artist stated:

*My Feet are my Wings* is a collective of photographs in which exists an analogy between the object and the human being, the object as live matter, capable of evoking feelings and sensations, capable of passing on to us a large amount of information left in it, contained by the energy of the people who participated in its making and those who will then make use of it. The object is a symbol of power, a symbol of belonging, of tenacity, of status, of style, of necessity, history, the beginning and the end. The object gives testimony to space and time.<sup>185</sup>

The disappearance of memory, when it seems mediated by the maculation of sight, are evident in the works of Ismael Monticelli (1987), *p4 – Projeto Cisco* [p4 – Mote Project], *p6 – Projeto Cisco* [p6 – Mote Project], *p16 – Projeto Cisco* [p16 – Mote Project], and *p21 – Projeto Cisco* [p21 – Mote Project] (all from 2011), in which the artist acquires and appropriates landscape paintings by unknown or anony-

183. Today, two of those paintings exist, one in the Assis Chateaubriand Collection in Rio de Janeiro, and another at the Museum of Contemporary Art of Rio Grande do Sul (MAC-RS), in Porto Alegre.

184. A complete description of the materials used in this painting can be found on my book, *Dilemas da Matéria: Procedimento, Permanência e Conservação em Arte Contemporânea* [Material Dilemmas: Procedure, Permanence, and Conservation in Contemporary Art], Porto Alegre, Museum of Contemporary Art of Rio Grande do Sul, [Portuguese and English], 63-64.

185. Walterio Iraheta, *Statement*, no date.

com poeira em um espaço no qual o pó não deveria existir. Tal questão impõe uma série de problemas conceituais que salientam os próprios desafios que a exposição colocou em discussão, a saber: como rediscutir o status canônico das obras quando sua realidade material muitas vezes se encontra no limite da dissolução? Como trabalhar com a “contaminação” física entre obras em um espaço no qual a poeira precisa ser rigorosamente controlada? Como manter os limites da contaminação do espaço pelo pó, como na obra *Sem título* (1987), de Nuno Ramos (1960)? [Fig. 1] Além disso, como atestar a existência de poeira, como na obra *Carencia* (2007-2015), de Carlos Castro Arias (1976), cuja própria existência depende do trânsito de partículas de poeira no espaço e seu depósito na superfície das obras, justamente em um ambiente que deveria estar imaculado e sem fragmentos de pó? Como pensar a incursão eventual dessas obras no espaço museológico e sua forma de ingresso e existência institucional?



**[Fig. 1]**  
**NUNO RAMOS**  
*Sem título*, 1987  
 Cal e madeira | Lime and wood  
 180 x 50 x 50 cm  
 Coleção | Collection Marcantonio  
 Vilaça | Comodato Santander Cultural,  
 Brasil  
 Foto: VivaFoto - Carlos Stein  
 Cortesia do artista e | Courtesy of the artist and  
 Galeria Fortes Vilaça

A obra de Castro Arias, por exemplo, consiste em um adesivo com um padrão de papel de parede cujo desenho, coberto com cola, é revelado à medida que a poeira vai impregnando sua superfície e aderindo a ela [Fig. 2].

Nesse mundo de trânsito contínuo e fragmentos de poeira entre obras e pessoas, a contaminação adquire um princípio degenerativo que corrompe a pureza do ambiente. A contaminação é um tabu ligado às doenças e à disseminação de infecções. Daí é possível entender a resistência em estabelecê-la em meio à cultura como um dispositivo produtivo da curadoria a fim de introduzir elementos de aprofundamento e ampliação do sentido de uma obra em relação à outra, ou até mesmo de atribuir a possibilidade de investigação de seus pressupostos conceituais e estéticos.

As exposições *A Poeira e o Mundo dos Objetos* e *Olfatória: O Cheiro na Arte* precisaram tratar da inclusão de um vasto conjunto de obras em um mesmo espaço, visto que a convivência delas por meio de justaposição era necessária e, também, materialmente problemática. Mas foi justamente tal característica que transformou essas plataformas em duas das mais desafiadoras da 10ª Bienal do Mercosul, tendo em vista que elas testavam os limites de convivência, como se disse necessária, entre uma obra e outra ou entre uma e várias que lhe problematizavam o espaço de exposição. Um desses exemplos é a obra *Engessados* (2014), de **Lucas Simões** (1980), na qual diversas peças de gesso sobre uma mesa devem ser manipuladas pelo público, sofrendo um desgaste que gera uma densa quantidade de poeira que se espalha pelo entorno [Fig. 3].



**[Fig. 2]**  
**CARLOS CASTRO ARIAS**  
*Carencia* | *Shortage*, 2007 - 2015  
 Adesivo transparente sobre parede | Transparent adhesive on wall  
 240 x 200 cm  
 Coleção do artista | Collection of the artist, Colômbia  
 Foto: VivaFoto - Fabio Del Re | Cortesia do artista | Courtesy of the artist

Vale lembrar que, mesmo no mais controlado dos ambientes, pequenas partículas de pó gravitam pelo espaço, traçando através do ar e eventualmente pousando sobre uma superfície, apenas para se deslocar novamente quando algum movimento brusco ocasionado pelo ar faz com que elas se movam. É precisamente essa dissipação da poeira que destaca nessa obra seu maior interesse, uma vez que é preferível que ela não esteja isolada, garantindo-se sua existência no espaço como uma obra sem requerimentos extras ou outros dispositivos para a sua exibição. Esse processo de contaminação material corresponde a uma inclinação metafórica que se realiza quando uma obra interfere conceitualmente na leitura da outra, seja por adição, seja por subtração.

A contaminação cultural é um dispositivo estratégico em exposições que pretendem expandir os limites do significado de obras, revelar os meandros conceituais de sua existência no universo da cultura e redefinir a materialidade do objeto artístico em seu potencial simbólico. Há ainda outro aspecto que é colocado à prova por meio da contaminação: o *status* canônico da obra e



[Fig. 3]

**LUCAS SIMÕES***Engessados*, 2014

Escultura em gesso e areia em mesa revestida de lixa | Sculpture in plaster and sand on table covered by sand

Dimensões variáveis | Variable dimensions

Coleção | Collection Galeria Emma Thomas, Brasil

Foto: Guilherme Dias | Cortesia do artista e | Courtesy of the artist and Galeria Emma Thomas

sua capacidade de resistir a investidas que testam os limites da canonicidade e os padrões recorrentes de manutenção da política de formação e do estabelecimento do cânone artístico. Podemos caracterizar o funcionamento da contaminação como uma estratégia colocada em movimento por um mecanismo de justaposição que, ao estabelecer um confronto entre obras, desloca temporariamente o significado para fora de sua circunscrição.

Esse deslocamento pode produzir efeitos temporários ou duradouros, sendo que ambos são importantes, pois acrescentam novas possibilidades de leitura para a obra e representam um campo de abertura para repensar a sua relevância em um modelo específico de exposição. A contaminação é, assim, um processo de “visibilidade estratégica” que redefine o *status* de intervenção do trabalho a fim de rearticular o perímetro da experiência artística pelo espectador como gerador de conhecimento também a partir dele.

## SMELL AND DUST AS MODELS OF CULTURAL CONTAMINATION

GAUDÊNCIO FIDELIS

The perception of odor is associated to a sensorial response that occurs when volatile molecules stimulate receptors on the nasal epithelium, which are located some centimeters behind the nose bridge. However, the recognition of distinct odors depends on information stored on memory and connected to that specific scent. Human beings have about 400 olfactory receptors, and each individual presents differences in those receptors, whereas some are greater and others, subtler. This distinction between each smell becomes harder to limit, because the air we breathe is full of odoriferous molecules that are hard to control, since they are in constant movement and, therefore, cannot be pinned to time and space. Olfaction plays an important role in our well-being. Odors have a considerable effect on behavior and humor, even impacting our quality of life, since they influence cognitive and behavioral processes, such as memory and preferences.

Despite those characteristics, human beings have an extraordinary capacity of perceiving distinct smells, especially those with strong odoriferous aspects. It is also worth noting that, in a larger or smaller degree, all individuals suffer from anosmia, in other words, the incapacity to smell.<sup>1</sup> On other occasion, I already referred metaphorically to this condition through what I called “ideological anosmia,”<sup>2</sup> the disposition to refuse the intrusive quality of smell purposefully avoiding acknowledging it in the exhibition space departing from a political motivation. It’s worth remembering, however, that such absence of smell in the canonical space of modernity, the so-called “white cube,” finds correspondence in the daily life routine of modernity and contemporaneity, in which the aseptic space of the public arena (the one that is controlled, obviously) demonstrates the clear expression of an exclusionary dimension. Olfaction is the most uncontrollable among our senses, precisely because odor is experienced by the same organ through which we breathe, since we are unable to hold our breath for over a few minutes – unless if, in an attempt to suppress olfaction, of course, we breathe through the mouth.

Smell can be an exceptional resource to be used in museums in order to benefit the perception of people with visual disabilities. Invariably, specialists have focused on other senses, such as touch, in substitution to sight, causing accessibility perspectives to remain restrictive. Some museums around the world already are exploring olfaction as an alternative to enhance the access to works of art and the artistic and cultural heritage. Richard J. Stevenson proposes several manners

1. Anosmia is an olfactory disturbance still rarely diagnosed, which is characterized by the incapacity of smelling in a larger or a smaller degree. Its causes may vary, including traumas suffered during life or even other of a congenital origin, such as the Kallmann syndrome. A number of situations may cause anosmia (temporary or permanent), such as chronic sinusitis, rhinitis, respiratory infections, head traumas, aging, whereas such condition can only be treated, in most cases, when caused by the first two.

2. See, especially, the chapter “Anosmia Ideológica: O Cubo Branco e a Ausência do Cheiro no Espaço Museológico,” in my book *Smell as a Criterion: Toward a Politics of Olfactory Curating* [Portuguese and English], (Chapecó: Editora Argos, 2015), 117-133.

In the exhibition *Dust and the World of Objects*, we faced one of the greatest dilemmas of installation, precisely because we were dealing with a necessity of making an exhibition in a space in which dust should not exist. Such question imposes a series of conceptual problems that highlight the very challenges the exhibition placed in discussion, as follows: how to revisit the canonic status of the works when their material reality often is on the limit of dissolution? How to work with the physical “contamination” of the works in a space in which dust must be rigorously controlled? How to maintain the limits of contamination of space through dust, as in the work *Sem título* [Untitled], (1987) by Nuno Ramos (1960)? [see fig. 1 on page 238] Besides, how to attest the existence of dust, like in the work *Carencia* [Shortage] (2007-2015), by Carlos Castro Arias (1976), the very existence of which depends on the transit of dust particles within space, and its deposit on the surface of works, precisely in an environment that should be immaculate and without fragments of dust? How to think the eventual incursion of these works in the museological space and its form of entrance in the institutional realm? The work of Castro Arias, for example, consists in an adhesive with a wallpaper pattern, the design of which, covered in glue, is revealed as the dust impregnates its surface and adheres to it [see fig. 2 on page 238].

In this world of continuous transit of dust fragments between works of art and people, the contamination acquires a degenerative principle that corrupts the purity of the environment. The contamination is a taboo connected to diseases and the dissemination of infections. From that, it is possible to understand the resistance in establishing it amidst culture as a productive device of curating with the intention of introducing elements of deepening and enhancing the meaning of one work in relation to another, or even of attributing the possibility of investigation of its conceptual and aesthetic presuppositions.

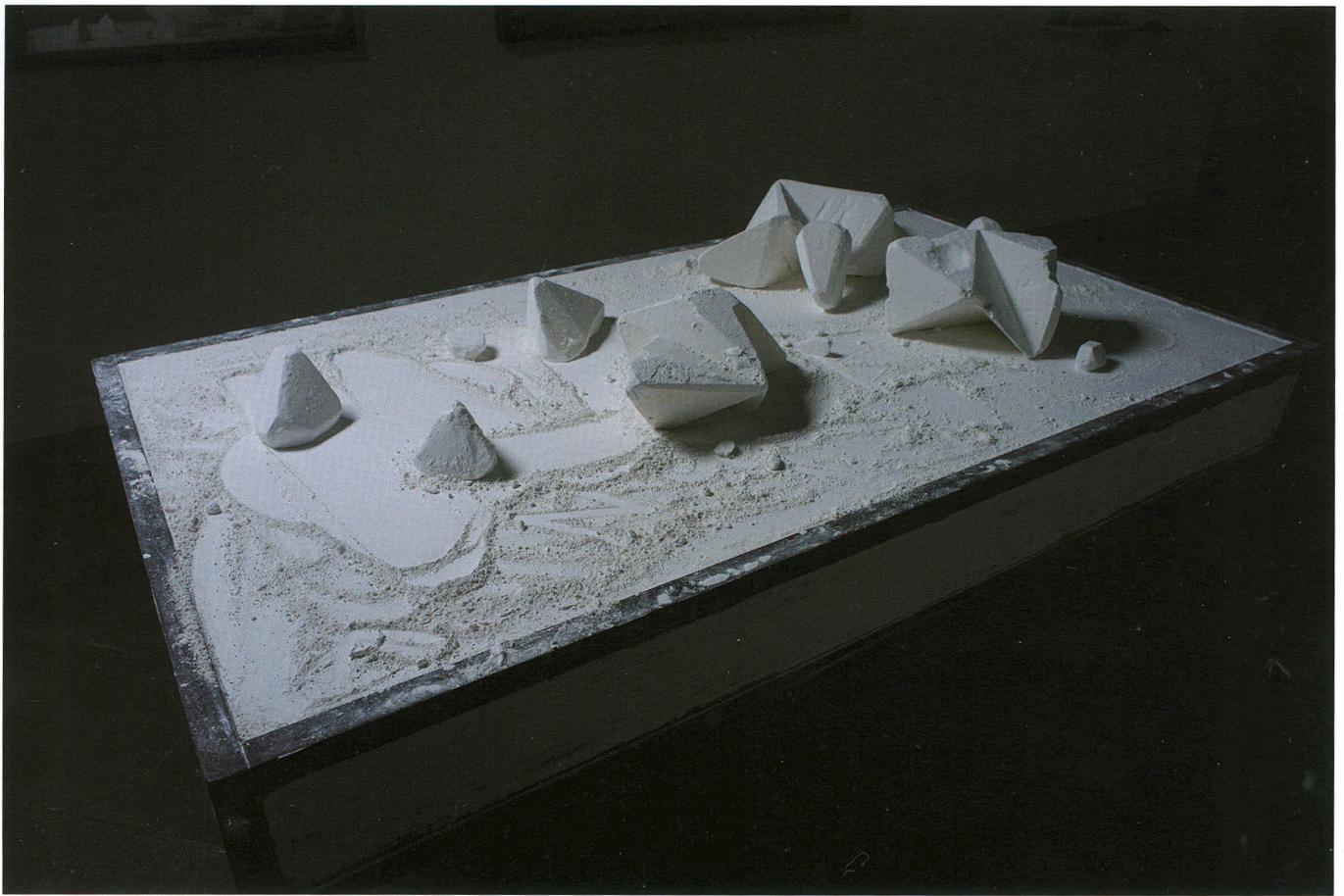
The exhibitions *Dust and the World of Objects* and *Olfactory: Smell in Art* needed to deal with the inclusion of a large group of works on the same space, since the coexistence of them through juxtaposition was necessary and, also, materially problematic. However, it was precisely such characteristic that transformed these platforms in some of the most challenging on the 10<sup>th</sup> Mercosul Biennial, keeping in mind that it tested the limits of coexistence, as mentioned, necessary, between a work and others, or between one and many that problematized the exhibition space. One of such examples is the work *Engessados* [Plastered] (2014), by Lucas Simões (1980), in which several pieces of plaster over a table must be manipulated by the viewers, suffering a detritation that generates a dense amount of dust that spreads to the surroundings [see fig. 3 on page 239].

It is worth remembering that, even in the most controlled environment, small particles of dust gravitate the space, crossing the air and eventually landing over the surface, only to be displaced again when a sudden movement caused by air forces them to move. It is precisely this dissipation of dust that highlights in this work its greatest interest, since it is preferable for it not to be isolated, ensuring its existence in space as a work without extra requirements, or other devices, for its exhibition. This process of material contamination interferes conceptually in the reading of the other, whether it is by addition or by subtraction.

Cultural contamination is a strategic device in exhibitions that intend on expanding the limits of the meaning of works, revealing the conceptual meanders of its existence in the universe of culture, and redefining the materiality of the artistic object in its symbolic potential.

There is still another aspect that is put to text through contamination: the canonical status of the work and its capacity of resisting the forays that test the limits of canonicity and the recurrent standards of management of the politics of formation and the establishment of the artistic canon. We may characterize the functioning of contamination as a strategy put in course by a juxtaposition mechanism that, by establishing a confrontation between works, displaces temporarily the meaning for beyond its circumscription.

This displacement may produce temporary or lasting effects, both being of importance, because they add new reading possibilities for the work and represent an opening field for rethinking its importance in a specific model of exhibition. Contamination is, thus, a process of “strategic visibility” that redefines the status of intervention of the work with the intention of rearticulating the perimeter of the artistic experience by the viewer as producers of knowledge also through him/her.



**LUCAS SIMÕES**

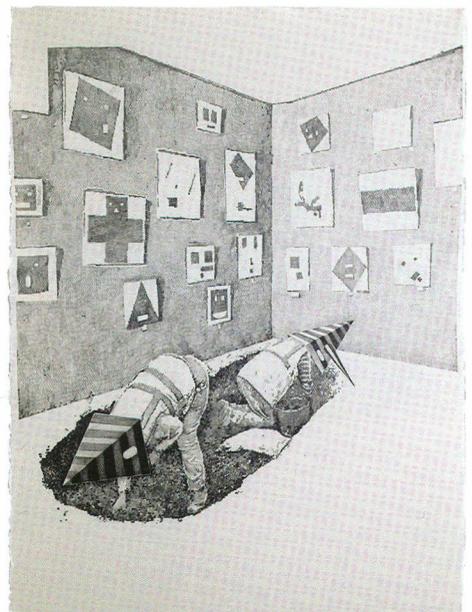
*Engessados*, 2014

Escultura em gesso e areia em mesa revestida de lixa grossa

Dimensões variáveis

Coleção Galeria Emma Thomas, Brasil

Foto: VivaFoto - Carlos Stein | Cortesia do artista e galeria Emma Thomas



**MARISOL MALATESTA**

*Possibility To Match Size and Shape*, 2014

Lápis sobre papel

76 x 57 cm

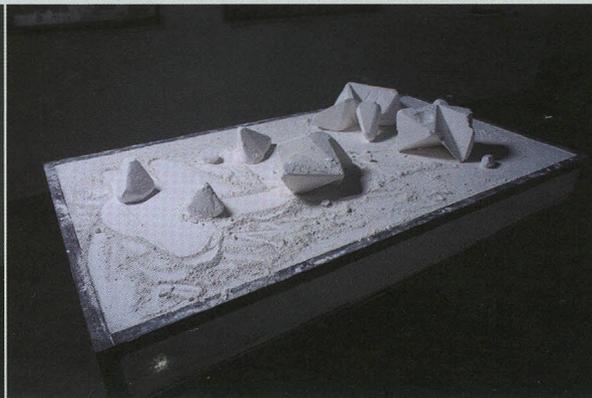
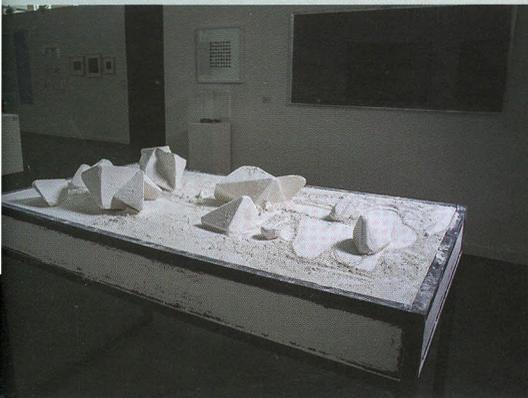
Coleção da artista, Peru

Foto: Cortesia da artista











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Small informational label on the right wall.



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