

Teresa Henriques

Use the Resources

OPENING SATURDAY 11 SEPTEMBER 4PM

14 SEPTEMBER – 23 OCTOBER 2010
TUESDAY – SATURDAY 3-8 PM

"...The idea of creation or **poiesis** is very broad and encompassing, for all and any passage from non-being into being is conducted by means of an act of creation; and all works done in all the arts are creations, and the **crafters** of these arts are creators, or **poets**. (...) However, we do not call them poets, and know them by other names. Only a small part of the act of creation – concerned with the arts and rhythm – is termed thusly. And only to this specific branch do we call **poetry**, and, likewise, only those who occupy themselves with it do we call poets."

Platon, the banquet 205b

The work of Teresa Henriques is made of withdrawal and suspension.

By suspending that which she knows and takes for granted, T. withdraws herself so that she may once again see. Turning her eyes inwards, reaching not for the *object* or the *artistic product*, but rather the *conditions* of its *production* and *understanding*.

The starting point is the drawing, from whence consecutive withdrawals are endeavoured, intensifying abstraction. If, on one hand, the usual strategies used to reach a result are deconstructed, substituting the former with an investigation on the exercise of drawing and the gesture that creates the line (*Maestro*), on the other hand, another step back – a withdrawal, if you will – is taken so as to meet the moment of seeing the drawing (*Anti-draw*). At last, another step back is taken, towards the state of mind which, in whispers, brings together the execution and the understanding of an artistic object (*Saudade*, *Ansiedade* or *Cinismo*).

The underlying strategy is denounced by the choice of titles: *Anti-draw* being a clear statement of intentions. This is not about reaching a result, an endgame; rather, it is about that previous, nigh invisible, often blurred, moment when a gesture creates.

The first withdrawal, in *Maestro*, focuses on the movement that draws, the moving arm, the first condition necessary to the possibility of the drawn line. Resorting to mechanical devices – a recurring element of research in T.'s work – fills, with striking irony, the space that is usually taken by the artist's choices, gestures and will, subjecting the former to an anonymous and neutralized determinism from whence the drawing is created: mechanisms blindly and obsessively drawing imaginary lines, repeating them with no interference from moods, affections or desires, making them endlessly similar. In *Maestro* all that is left is the deep groove which, engrained in the wood of the box that supports it, draws the line we do not see on the wall, like the negative print of a stroke that should exist but has been extinguished to silence. Here the withdrawal is immense and indeed the drawing itself has been suppressed. We see the action that relays us to a missing result: the arm that draws on the wall ironically creates lines that are not visible, a resistance to the tyranny of keeping the action from its product. These are gestures free from the restraints of conscience, whose results hold the delicacy of human restraint, of the expected, yet unsaid, word.

In a second moment, the withdrawal happens at a different level, and the denunciation is now aimed at the act of seeing itself. *Anti-draw* discloses the ruse to which our senses have made us numb, exposing the frailties of our access to things. The lines presented to us are in fact loose or, as in *Cinismo* and *Ansiedade*, draw profiles that cannot be restrained by two dimensions. On the wall or in the air, we find rebellious outlines willing to expose their palpable nature. What we see are lines drawing themselves, which we find as filaments of an altogether different kind (horse-hair, wire), outside the paper, drawing illusions. They draw our invisible and illusory way of seeing.

Another step back and we find T. choosing rudimentary mechanisms, common and compulsive motors in their ceaseless repetition of movements, named to save them from the utilitarian universe which, in their everyday use, restrains them. Thus they emerge, identified with other orders of being, as human as they are ineffable, such as *Saudade* (longing), *Cinismo* (cynicism) or *Ansiedade* (anxiety).

In a feat of impossible alchemy, windshield and mirror ball motors became states of mind and reveal the inside of understanding. Turned upside down, exposing the void interior of a thought inside a human profile (*Cinismo*, *Ansiedade*), and revealing the true nature of that which does not meet the eye: moods, values, fears and pathologies conditioning what we see. Precise metaphors of daily life, materializing the point from where the world is seen, making that escape point invisible and the space of the observers, themselves, the eye's focus.

We see, as in a child's game, the *Problema* (problem) we try to solve by looking at it from different angles, turning it around and upside down, rotating it obsessively and incessantly inside our heads; a kaleidoscope that is, after all, our own nature, amplifying, reproducing and extending this *Problema* to its maximum latitude until it fully fills our thoughts.

And thus, in the route taken by T., drawing establishes the comfort zone from whence we have withdrawn ourselves. Firstly from the drawing to the gesture that draws, as in previous works (*Aleatógrafo*), haunted by rudimentary and random mechanisms, caricatures of blind artists, of arms without a mind, until we come to this, a new withdrawal where the line drawn as a register and the memory of that gesture are suppressed, leaving us only with a perpetual movement, one that is indifferent to results and stubbornly mute.

From here we take a step back and question the eyes' gaze, revealing its ambiguous nature. And finally, in a tremendous leap backwards of immense latitude into the impossible realms of thought, T. brings to light the stage curtain, silent and invisible and yet the supreme condition of human production and understanding.

All these backward movements are made matter by resorting to rudimentary mechanisms, unconscious motors, habitually excluded from the world of values. Mechanical devices, neutral – here made poetic metaphor. Machines now contaminated by a load that is foreign to their intuitive understanding. "This is it" – we say, as we see ourselves, our gestures, our senses, moods and pathologies, here repeated in a mechanical performance *ad infinitum*.

A withdrawal of another kind, within time itself - to ancient Greece, where **Poesis** was the name of *Fabrication*, *Production*, but also of *Poetic Creation*. A return to the common root of artistic activity itself.

Sofia Pinto Basto