

Mirrors of heaven

Teixeira Coelho

Every great artist is dangerous. Dangerous for those who work with and around her (the gallery that shows her works, the artisans that execute the basic tasks she requires), for the critics (uncertain as to the value of what this artist shows them), and for the public (who do not know how to react to something that does not show the usual signs of artisticity and suspect that all this is ultimately being done against them – and they usually do not know how true this is...).

Dangerous this artist is above all to herself when she does things that puts her work, the possibility of executing it and its acknowledgement at risk. This kind of artist is a generalized threat.

The most uncommon radicality of Regina Silveira can be seen in three basic traits of her work. To begin with, at a time when one will insist that anything whatsoever is art, Regina Silveira associates herself with some of the most founding bases of art tradition: the know how, the expertise, the mastering of the code, the painstaking requirement that everything should be in its right place, rigorously calculating its effects.

Secondly, in her committing to the narrative accumulated by art tradition, from which she extracts certain techniques – the perspective, which she reinvents; the anamorphosis, magnified; and some fundamental themes (the easel, the artist's studio, the geometrical solids taken from one's first ever art lessons, the main works by famous artists).

Thirdly, in her deciding to profoundly review ways of using and representing these themes and techniques.

Regina Silveira rejects the commonplaces and the ruts in which part of contemporary art gets stuck, such as insisting on easy procedures (as in much installation and performance) or the literality of what is represented (too much servile realism in photography) or on the other hand insisting on the obscurity of what is allegedly put in the work (as in those conceptualisms that have in the artist himself or in the professional group of the curators its first or only public). Most of all, she does not “addresses issues”, which is the weakest pretexts for doing art today (or that which is supposed to be art) and at the same time the most common pretext for it.

Regina Silveira pushes the vital principles of her contemporary art to their extremes. In her own words—and she knows what she is talking about—her chosen battlefield is that of representation, with all its limits and alternatives. But this does not mean she is trapped within the narrow bounds of an art that only speaks of art. The world outside art is also involved in her pieces: the world of everyday people and objects, the artificial world of man, the world of the history of the place where this art is being made. Objects in the world she takes possession of may be a huge monument or sculpture group by a major Brazilian modernist artist or an almost irrelevant ladder or pool, or a tiny filthy fly or an iconic piece by a founding father of contemporary art. Her recurring territory is metaphysics—an uncomfortable place where nobody ventures lightly—but also that of the most mundane irony. Almost always, both these two “subjects” battle for space in one and the same work. This, again, disturbs the public, dealers, and critics.

The great majority of contemporary visual art in fact consists of works that are too small, or too brief (even when they are large in size), too breathless to contain more than one aesthetic category, much less categories that accumulates antagonistic tones. Today, this multiplicity of nuances is more often seen in literature or the cinema. But it may be found in the work of truly dangerous artists of the past, or of the present day.

Furthermore, in the case of Regina Silveira usually there is not a solid work that the artist leaves behind as an aesthetic residue. of her action. Her material of choice may be either an worthless object that may be thrown away when her piece is removed from the venue in question (a saint, a sphere) or (perhaps more commonly) paint applied on the floor and on the wall that is later erased, or a vinyl cut out and applied and then taken off and ruined. There is a physical instability in the work of this artist (sometimes what one purchases from her is just a CD—ROM with instructions for the production and installation of the work) that can only be proposed by someone who is completely

sure of what she is doing in the context of a scenario that is however still dominated by traditional values (the canvas, the solid object, the beautiful material).

The aesthetic values Regina Silveira poses are demanding values, values that at the same time are constantly put at risk (by herself, to begin with).

Running all risks, and not least that of finding herself alone in her own lane, Regina Silveira has defined for her art a place of national and now worldwide dimension--which suits very well an artist that, as every great artist, is audaciously striving to populate the world with her devices.

*Danger and depths to the ocean God gave
But it is in him that the sky reflects.*

Fernando Pessoa