

VALESKA SOARES

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GREENBERG VAN DOREN AND ELEVEN RIVINGTON

by brianoucher

NEW YORK

Brazilian-born, New York-based Valeska Soares's recent two-part show included sculptures and installations that engaged in her customary play with language and sensory immersion. "Passa tempo," at Greenberg van Doren (all works 2009 or '10), greeted the visitor with *Timeline I*. On a wire strung between two adjacent walls hung 31 book pages, each bearing a section or chapter title. "Yesterday / The Day and the Night / A Segment of My Times / And Now Tomorrow / The Morning Watch," read one sequence. The pages, variously yellowed and bright white, wrinkled and crisp, fluttered in the air currents and made the viewer especially aware of the phenomenon of time passing—whether while viewing art or reading books. In view of Soares's minimalist esthetic, one could also understand the piece as a sly reference to critical discussions of temporality in Minimalist art.

Stretching over 40 feet of the gallery's main room was *Un-rest*, comprising more than 100 footstools arranged in an arc. At the head of this assembly stood a glass chair, like a chief addressing his minions. The worn footstools, dating from the 19th century, come in various shapes and sizes, some wood, some colorfully upholstered. Several feature embroidered or painted doggerel about using the stool "to reach the things I couldn't / and lots of things I shouldn't." Matisse once said that he wanted people to feel about his art the way they would about a comfortable chair; while this work's title suggests it was aiming for the opposite, the piece fell short of having any substance.

In a back room, 19 wooden boxes featuring marquetry landscapes, most with palm trees, were hung in a row at eye level to form *Horizontes III*. According to the press release, these too are antique, and depict Brazilian scenes. The cigar boxes, sewing kits and keepsake holders were aligned so that their horizon lines meet up, perhaps a visual attempt to create a unified whole from a number of partial, codified representations of the artist's home country. The fact that she was born in Belo Horizonte may make this a signature work of sorts.

At Eleven Rivington, a simple gesture, repetition and the canny use of materials combined in the installation *Vaga Lume* (2006), for the strongest work in the two shows. According to the gallery's website, the Portuguese title refers to "a light that is subtle, wandering, vague and transient." The tiny gallery's ceiling was covered with functioning fixtures holding a single bare bulb each; from all dangled silvery beaded chains that stretched almost to the floor in perfect rows. As viewers-rapt when I visited—disrupted the pattern while moving through the room, they pulled the chains, turning the lights on and off. In the process, they both created and embodied a "wandering light."

Photo: View of Valeska Soares's installation Vaga Lume, 2006, mixed mediums; at Eleven Rivington.

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