

Intervals and Developments

The projections made by Elaine Tedesco on the streets and landscapes of a few towns in the countryside of the state of Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil, reveal how a creative work may develop into different interconnected works, which are, however, at the same time, independent. This work also reveals to us how much more fully an artist's work can be understood in its development, and also reveals the role of critical reflection, which has been increasingly practiced by the artist him/herself regarding their work, on presenting to us the game that takes place inside the work, usually hidden from the public that sees it.

The interventions performed by Elaine Tedesco on the daily order of things in a small town in the countryside would already be enough to locate this production of hers within the contemporary artistic scene. Interventions in towns or landscapes are more and more being legitimized as an expressive form of our times, and it is quite surprising to see how an increasingly large number of artists have been establishing that kind of works as the axis of their production. In Brazil these manifestations have occurred practically

throughout the last seventy years, if we consider Flávio de Carvalho's "Experience nr. 2" , in 1931, as an inaugural milestone, which was later to be further developed in the proposals of Hélio Oiticica, Rubens Gerchman, Arthur Barrio, Cildo Meireles, Paulo Brusky and other artists of the 60s and 70s, until they reappeared systematically in the works done by urban intervention groups that proliferated (particularly) in São Paulo throughout the 80s.

Elaine chose small towns along the Rio Grande do Sul coast for her "traveling interventions". These interventions always occurred for short periods, and were practically dematerialized: they made use of luminous projections in order to introduce themselves in the context of those towns. With a projector and several slides showing images overlapped one each other, the artist "occupied" streets and buildings with silent, enigmatic nocturnal projections. These images, unlike the luminous ad signs projected on the sides of buildings in large cities (already at the end of the 19th century), do not "stand out" on the surface on which they are projected. On the contrary, in the projections made by the artist, the images of landscapes, objects or people immersed in sand integrate themselves to the surface that supports them. The walls of houses or the façade of a church become constituent parts of the scene created, whose photographs ultimately result in another image, and often in another work.

In other interventions, the artist took a few objects that are part of installations produced previously by her, to the landscape close to Lagoa dos Patos (Patos Lagoon). On one of those occasions, she transported a “box-ladder-chair”, as she herself calls it, to the beach, to photograph it there. After it was photographed, the ladder was left at the same site, until it was removed anonymously, to disappear as an artistic object and now to exist only as a photographic image. This documentation, in turn, comes back to the artist’s work, as material for new projections into urban space or new installations, thus completing a cycle of existence as an object, installation, intervention and image in the domains of art.

This intermedia migration, which is in no way similar to the so-called multimedia art of the beginning of this century, has a freshness of liberty and research typical of an art liberated from the labels to which many attach themselves. Her involvement with photography in the development of her objects and environments, has brought her the awareness that, by leaps and bounds, the image of a work becomes the material of another, as “part of an assembly, part of another image”. In this way “a work thus contains its continuity in the other”. Reflecting on this mechanism, the artist tells us that, “in the creative process, this continuity does not necessarily occurs by repetition or duplication of actions. Often the work implicitly presents an internal contradiction which may be used in a next one”. According to Elaine, photography

established a “distance from the ongoing process”, enabling her to take a critical distance from the work. In other words, on contemplating the photographs of a work that is being developed, the artist manages to reflect more objectively on it. She sees in photography “a way of establishing a distance from the ongoing process”, using this medium to operate “a spatial/temporal section, a rupture in the flow” of creative work. “This is when the process becomes an image, becomes fixed, creating an interval that allows me to reflect on what has happened so far. And it is only after photographing some stage of the work that I manage to write about it”. These statements are revealing, since they show us that, only after being transformed into an image can the work process be analyzed by taking a reflective distance. This indicates the strong conceptual aspect implicit in photography; for what was already called the capacity to “see better”, possible because of the photographic image. This attentive, long look at the images is a feature of the contemplative look, the look that is inspired by day-dreaming. For the artist, photography also serves as a “writing pad”, since, according to her, the volume of images captured is so large that the memory would not be able to carry out such a great amount of processing: “so many images are recorded that I forget most of what I photograph; the photograph then becomes a witness to the act”. With this form of automatic writing of the images, the artist appears to behave like a person who draws. In her writing pad there are increasing amounts of records of her perceptions of objects

and landscapes that, in her later work in the studio, or in her “traveling interventions”, will return incorporated into photographic panels or luminous projects, as transient as matter itself.

Mario Ramiro