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Paulo Herkenhoff

Identified objects

Identified objects, those strange sculptures by Ivens Machado. The viewer's initial sense of strangeness is embraced by the danger and tension immediately perceived in the artwork.

Ivens Machado is always the same and always the other. Taking recourse from diverse techniques and languages: drawing, installation, performance, video art, relief, object, sculpture for new questionings. He's the other in a new production. Recurrent problems in deepening, transforming levels – the same, concentrating. Today, the other Ivens Machado does civil-construction-sculptures while Ivens Machado, the same, resumes delving into the norm.

"Every time I'm doing some work it's like I'm starting out, as if I had no memory." Denial of memory as accumulated value (Ivens Machado, the other).

The artist exposes his building method. Reinforced concrete. Iron beams. Trades of civil construction. Tricks of slum and inner-city constructions. Tension. This volume/space is erected into a dwelling of the gaze. The column that finds its balance, the shells that open up, the matter, unusual – the eye grasps all. The shack that stands on end on the hill. The knack: these pieces are surprisingly stable.

"The thorough expression of sculpture is spatial – it's the tridimensional realization of an idea by the construction of space or mass. Sculpture materials are unlimited in their variety of quality, tension and vitality." (Barbara Hepworth).

Popular architectural order: the resources, the knack, matters and materials offer themselves as a repertoire of possibilities. The artist acts as the architect of his work.

Cement / Iron beam / Tile / Glass shards

Everything is construction matter/material

The foreman pre-arranges the sculpture and then seeks its worldly presence: balance.

Weight in space.

"Matter is the first opponent for the poet of the hand. It has all the multiplicity of the hostile world, of a world to be subdued." (Bachelard)

Iron is structure, support. It is overtly the bone of such masses – body. Iron beam to the naked eye.

When creating his spaces/volumes, Ivens shuns recourse to such materials as some visit to a kitsch paradise. Never.

New Wave. Or paternalist elegy of the popular. Gleans plastic sensuousness from matter and constructional attitude via the precarious. Extraction of a knowledge. Re-elaboration in another order. Artist's art.

Wire nets/exit and entrance control. Veil of the gaze. Mesh. Inversion. Flexible matter in the work; what was holding back is captured by a cement volume. What was prison is prisoner.

Masonry. Ivens, sign incorporator. The mason's trowel accumulates quantities of matter in different colors. The sculptor uses space as mortar and produces the sculpture. Dimension is born as Cézanne's brushstroke sets his work in space and matter. Rough-cast plastering. The way of the wholeness, how each brick builds the house.

"Cézanne's hardships are those of the first word." (Merleau-Ponty).

These sculptures possess their own color. Mortar, pigment powder, tiles: impregnation of color into the mortar. It's not make-up nor wall-painting. Earthy hues.

"Architecture and sculpture are both dealing with the relations among the masses." (Henry Moore).

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Recent sculptures refer to the development of Ivens Machado's work along the last twelve years. The artist has set a trend: the 'norm' issue. The whole of his oeuvre will be more aptly apprehended when historically situated in relation to dictatorship and repression years in Brazil. A reading at the time of metaphors.

Ceramic tile reliefs (1972-73). These tiles would never be seen in Jean-Pierre Raynaud's house. The square proposes a mesh that the nail, the hook, the drainpipe interrupt as a maculation of mathematics, as fissures in asepsis.

The artist drew sheets of ruled paper or used rolls of paper printed by line-ruling machines (1974-75) whose pens were diverted from their course. The artist interferes in space: drawing and gesture are the breaking of the norm, the diversion from the line, from the track, from pedagogy, intervention in time – interruption of the infinite of parallel lines. Breaking the rhythm of the gaze: intervention on the body of the other.

In the series of drawings of printed lines that get erased/undone, Ivens operates the deconstruction of the norm, of the traditional conduits of calligraphy that condition the body for the ideal model (norm). The drawing 'De Kooning apagado por Rauschenberg/De Kooning erased by Rauschenberg' is the deconstruction of history, marked by the individual, concrete names. In these drawings, the possible reference to Rauschenberg doesn't come through as a copy of the esthetic model but rather as an ethical pattern of a time. To Ivens, the operation takes place in the general and abstract planes. Away with perspective refused as an artifice, as an art edifice. Away with the geometry of distances (metric) or of the straight line (projective).

To Ivens, finger and eraser are instruments of a drawing that refuses the artist a body tamed by Fine Arts pedagogy.

'Obstáculos/Medidas – Obstacles/Measurements' (MAM-RJ/1975): city walls of different heights are rebuilt inside the Museum, in a crescendo of barriers to the body and to the gaze. The space setting follows the rule of the enlargement of the 'No'. Wall – privacy protection against the presence of the other. Constitution of the secret. Opacity. The artist jumped over the wall, broke off interdiction, unveiled societal logic in this shadow zone. Inside MAM-RJ, during visiting hours, behind the wall: symbolic space conquered by the subject/artist via delinquency, obscenity and scatology against the norm/castration – in favor of freedom.

"In the prison-city there is a multiple network of diverse elements – walls, space, institution, rules, discourses. (...) a strategic distribution of elements of different levels and natures." (Foucault)

Glass shards on wall (1975-79). Aggressive protection of property in Brazilian cities. Decipherable sign of punishment. The fear of the wound/pain locks out the thief-body. Ivens makes large cement sculptures studded with sharp glass shards: Brazil's map, carpet, boomerang, dildo. The symbolic character of these objects + glass shards = distress. Witchcraft against witch. The viewer's body does not deny response. Caution and concentration. Defense. Survival face-to-face with the aggressiveness of the norm.

The rule in Ivens's current works are the laws of physics, nature's ruling. Life of matter, existence of matter in the world. Time/space/balance attaining their poetics via the norm.

Ivens's works, in their anxiety, operate the fulcrum, the moment that no longer comes about only in the world of physical (mass/volume/weight) or esthetic (formal harmony) balance. Their field is anxiety, latent in the viewer, generated by impotence before the imminent balance, the trespassed rule. The distress of the gaze lies in the fantasies and phantoms before the static object that may refuse its condition, awaken from its immobility, accomplish its fate.

Ivens exposes the norm as occultation and interdiction, prescription and penalty. Power that intervenes as hypothesis on the gaze/body of the spectator. Paradoxically, his art operates in the actual field of non-seeing. Soul before the artwork becomes a prison of the body (Foucault): it incorporates the norm that tames the body.

"I am not interested in a relationship with art history." (Ivens Machado).

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In his work, the artist is often searching for relations outside the art context. This is set in tension by the challenges that Ivens hurls into the art circuit. Market and Museums are urged to face uncommon weights and dimensions, the eternity of the artwork or the complexity of its re-installation, hostile or fragile materials. Ivens tests the capability of dealing with objects where the artist's time is condemned to materialize in sensitivity and reason. Knowing how to relate to these works is to step through the threshold of the knowledge they propitiate. It's to know art where the nearsighted only sees encumbrances.

Finally, what are these works by Ivens Machado? Columns seeking their support. Identified objects. Things that claim their place in space, the attention of the gaze, the response of the body. They are like landings. Encumbrances and Entanglements.

Translated by Paulo Andrade Lemos

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