

Medium	Web	Publication	Folha de São Paulo
Date	14.June.2015	Author	Márcia Fortes (translated by Alessandra Kipnis)
Event	Work – Ivens Machado		
Web address	http://www1.folha.uol.com.br/ilustrissima/2015/06/1641276-chris-burden-e-ivens-machado-se-foram-na-mesma-nuvem.shtml		

Chris Burden and Ivens Machado departed on a single cloud

MARCIA FORTES

14/06/2015 02h04

Two artists, who seem to have little in common at first glance, passed away on consecutive days last month. In spite of their differences, both Brazilian Ivens Machado and American Chris Burden produced incisive work that explores situations related to male bodies, sexuality and politics.

*

We are looking at two artists who were born in the mid-twentieth century, one in North America and the other in South America. They were both believers and practitioners of the transgressive character of art. Throughout their careers, one armed himself with the sovereignty of success whereas the other struggled for the recognition of his own value.

At one point, both came across an inexorable obstacle named cancer, before which we are all equal. One artist succumbed to it, the other overcame it but he had skeletons in his closet: a drinking problem. Both passed away last May. One on Sunday 10 and the other on Monday 11. They were, respectively, 69 and 73. Chris Burden and Ivens Machado, who would have guessed, departed on a single cloud. It came too soon for them.

At first, this seems a preposterous idea - the pretension of bringing together two artists with such distinct trajectories as a reaction to a mere tragic coincidence. Burden and Machado never met in person. Nor did they have an exhibition together. A first glance does not reveal clear similarities in their work. However, it is possible to draw legitimate analogies.



"Trans-fixed" (1974), by Chris Burden

Burden and Machado were engaged agents of art as performance, presenting the human body as both subject and medium of their work. Both artists' genealogy unfolds over the history of sculpture, but before that they embraced the behavior of bodies as their material, either in live or recorded performances.

Medium	Web	Publication	Folha de São Paulo
Date	14.June.2015	Author	Márcia Fortes (translated by Alessandra Kipnis)
Event	Work – Ivens Machado		
Web address	http://www1.folha.uol.com.br/ilustrissima/2015/06/1641276-chris-burden-e-ivens-machado-se-foram-na-mesma-nuvem.shtml		

From a historical standpoint, these artists established themselves in the midst of the turbulent social and political scene in the 1960s and 1970s: mass movements called for sexual freedom and racial equality in the United States, whereas people in Brazil fought for freedom under the censorship of a military dictatorship. Between 1970 and 1975, Burden and Machado emerged from the art circuit with an intense production. There was a latent feeling that the common denominator in their production was both questioning forms of authority and challenging limits.

Burden had himself shot for art's sake in 1971 ("Shoot"), placing himself before the shooter who hit him in the left arm. Armed with disconcerting incitement and vulnerability, he delegated absolute power to the other. Was it a reference to the Vietnam War that haunted the imagination of male Americans? The work lasted hundredths of seconds, but it has reverberated through the decades in a series of free associations.

In "Through the Night Softly" (1973), Burden wriggled through broken glass scattered on the ground. This lyrical title is perverted in precise seven seconds of pain and blood in a filmed performance which was subsequently aired as a TV ad.

In that same year, Machado delivered a performance with his body entirely swathed in surgical gauze, in a toned-down relation to Burden's self-flagellation, experimenting with different connotations of deprivation and pain. In the video entitled "*Escravidador/Escravo*" ("Slaver/Slave", 1974), Machado – with his Aryan, white complexion – performs with a black actor, staging torture and domination while hurling critical references to the poorly veiled racist vernacular in Brazil.

Antagonistic and complementary, he presents the video named "Versus" in which a white body approaches a black one, suggesting a fusion between them. "Versus" was eventually censored for (possibly) alluding to a gay kiss.

In "Trans-fixed" (another work from 1974), Burden conceived his own crucifixion with his palms nailed to the back of a Volkswagen Beetle. The car's engine was revved to full speed for two minutes – "Screaming for me", as defined by the artist.

Machado's screaming was less hyperbolic, albeit just as dreadful. He staged "*Cerimônia em Três Tempos*" ("Ceremony in Three Acts", 1973) at the *Museu de Arte Moderna do Rio* (Museum of Modern Art of Rio de Janeiro) – three rickety white tiled tables crumbling under the simulacrum of a large meat shank hanging from a hook on the ceiling. A violent narrative that enunciates, among other possible readings, the pathos of dictatorship.

SCULPTURE

Machado migrated from the dematerialized territory of performance to sculpting before Burden did so in the late 1970s. From then on, his works followed two asymmetric vectors, namely, eroticism and bravery. However, both artists followed in the footsteps of certain authors and actors in physical manifestations with disturbing meanings and effects.

In "*Consolador/Dildo*" ("Comforter/Dildo", 1979), Machado afflicts us with a plump form coated with thick pieces of glass that are traditionally used on the top of walls in Brazilian houses. He also created "*Mapa Mudo*" (Silent Map) in 1979, a concrete sculpture with the shape of the map of Brazil, studded with pieces of glass. This is a masterpiece that moves away from form towards the most forceful political argument. Over the 1980s and 1990s, he made strange forms out of concrete, pigments, stones and iron. Machado used to say that he constructed the visible and that "the strange feeling that they cause must be related to our own strangeness".

Medium	Web	Publication	Folha de São Paulo
Date	14.June.2015	Author	Márcia Fortes (translated by Alessandra Kipnis)
Event	Work – Ivens Machado		
Web address	http://www1.folha.uol.com.br/ilustrissima/2015/06/1641276-chris-burden-e-ivens-machado-se-foram-na-mesma-nuvem.shtml		



Untitled Sculpture (1988), by Ivens Machado

Burden, on the other hand, channeled Houdini's spirit of deadly challenges from his initial works into technical prowess on an imposing scale.

If he at first exhibited his own body, he later put other bodies to the test. "Samson", (1985) is a half-sculpture, half-performance work which consists of a jack placed between two thick logs connected with a turnstile at the entrance of the exhibition space. Each input on the turnstile causes the logs to thrust the walls, testing the engineering limits of the building, potentially destructible by the contraption.

In "Beam Drop" (1984/2008), about sixty steel beams used in construction are vertically dropped from a crane over a large hole of wet cement. Gravity exerts its dramatic power and the beams are then fixed into the concrete at random angles, thus taking the shape of a massive sculpture.

Sexual sublimation is stressed in Machado's forms, similarly to the coitus of Burden's beams penetrating the cement (this work is currently part of Instituto Inhotim's collection, as is "Sansão"). Burden's physical limits and Machado's psychological ones, or the other way around. The limits are transmutable.

"'Limit' is a relative term. Just like 'beauty', it is in the eye of the beholder", said Burden. Such extreme characteristic permeates both artists' works, even though Machado was more attached to sensorial perceptions and Burden, to the ostentatious.

Burden practiced direct figuration, using police uniforms, cars, cranes, submarines, sky-scrappers and even gold bars. While reflecting an American tv ideal, he produced sculptures that convey vivid narrative images. A cinematic sculptor.

Alternatively, Machado appeals more to a wild instinct. He would materialize the form without excessively embellishing it with significance. The form itself seems to speak, as if it poured out something the viewer could absorb. The sculpture transpires.

An untitled tongue-colored sculpture from 1988, made out of concrete and pigment, hangs from the wall by a steel cable and has a rough surface with sharp stones sprouting out of its tip. It alludes to the penis, the scrotum. A piece that works both as a synthesis and as a metaphor.

Medium	Web	Publication	Folha de São Paulo
Date	14.June.2015	Author	Márcia Fortes (translated by Alessandra Kipnis)
Event	Work – Ivens Machado		
Web address	http://www1.folha.uol.com.br/ilustrissima/2015/06/1641276-chris-burden-e-ivens-machado-se-foram-na-mesma-nuvem.shtml		

Over the past fifteen years, Burden created pieces made of aluminum and concrete blocks, typical of modular toys, in order to replicate all components of famous bridges. This resulted in works that are similar to these small-scale bridges.

The practice of accumulating and repeating echoes in Machado's work in the same period, when he employed tons of logs and stones in works of indisputable poetic force, some on an ambitious scale. While Burden explored manufacturing, Machado turned to the earth - he explored the weight of stones and built elevations made of logs like spiraled huts and large wheels stuffed with cement.

Burden would put his mastery over the elements into practice in his work. Machado, in turn, employed materials that raged out of absolute control.

Both Burden and Machado are products of culture itself. One of them would react to raw materials and instability, the other to manufacturing and wealth. Nevertheless, the male gender responsible for such constructions is perceptible in the artists' productions. The pulse of testosterone can be felt in their work. Both produced macho art. They were kids in a classic physical relation with the world, going through boys' things such as construction materials.

Burden passed away at home in Los Angeles. He left an ongoing show with new works at the Paris branch of the prestigious Gagosian Gallery - the exhibition was extended to September 19. There we can find, among other large scale pieces, the impressive "Porsche with Meteorite" (2013): a Porsche and a meteorite are suspended by an industrial-sized scale in a tense and yet subtle balance.

Machado passed away in his house in Rio. He had not exhibited any new work since 2010, despite having participated in some sparse shows, including one collective at the equally prestigious Hauser & Wirth in Zurich. He died leaving behind his art devaluated, almost abandoned.

Burden left us as a recognized, influent and imitated artist. Machado was in dire straits, albeit influent and imitated. Two sculptors, one technological, the other organic. One sort of pop, the other sort of "Povera". Both displaying superior quality - two of the best are gone.

MARCIA FORTES, 48, is a founding partner of Galeria Fortes Vilaça. She worked as a journalist, translator, critic and art curator before becoming a gallerist.