

“I need these words written”.

Arthur Bispo do Rosário

To make one's way through the territory of the philosophy of language is to use the premises of Ludwig Wittgenstein which defined that the function of language is to describe reality, because strictly nothing can be given outside language. Thought and language are one and the same thing for Wittgenstein, where thought is made up of complex prepositions, which unite names, simple signs of objects. It is not possible to portray the existent similarities between a portrait and a portrayed object, it is also not possible to say, to express through enunciations the logical form common to language and to reality. This way, language only shows itself, but nothing says<sup>1</sup>.

To make one's way therefore through fine arts and its relationship with language is an herculean job. If the word, or even better, the verbal sign was used in the past by the cubists, dadaists and futurists only as icons, it is in the field of conceptual art that this will see its meaning in evidence. When he painted *Ceci n'est pas une pipe*, René Magritte promoted the displacement of the linguistic sign of the purely visual field to the epistemological semantical field. Magritte inaugurates conceptual art by incorporating the linguistics of Wittgenstein to the pictorial space.

Magritte's *Pipe* and later, Joseph Kosuth's *Chair* confirm Maurice Merleau-Ponty's assertive that a word is not a “sign” of thought, if we comprehend as such a phenomenon which announces the other one, like smoke announces fire. “Word and thought would only admit this exterior relationship if one and the other were given thematically; in reality they are involved with each other, sense is attached to the word, and the word is an exterior existence of sense”<sup>2</sup>. In *The Prose of the World*, Merleau-Ponty defends that everything can be resumed to nouns, these are the ways which we comprehend things, in other words, they are the essence of the world<sup>3</sup>.

We could say that the work of artist Rosana Ricalde searches for this essence of the world as it catalogues that which is present in the world; or what we call world, using Heidegger's expression. In *Being and Time*, the purpose of the philosopher was to bring to light what *being* means to men, or how it is to *be*. In this manner, Rosana gives meaning to the world through means of proper nouns - people's names, places, areas -. Operating an anthropogeography, the artist creates a web to humanity, turning the world into a thing. As in history, in culture, in its linguistic variants, literary or philosophical, we see it in the work of Rosana Ricalde as a base for the plastic construction rooted in an imagery where significant and meaning are the same. However, her work does not restrict itself to semiotics, it incorporates poetry, art and the history of local and universal art as evidence which makes art and not linguistic or semiotics.

From this art, a self-describing text of a poet serves as a pretext to the construction of a geometric surface, apparently monochromatic, which remind us of abstract paintings. As we come closer to the work of art, we see that the images are made up of letters of labeling tapes. These “mechanical paintings” are called *Self-portraits*, in yellow, blue, red, green and black. They are like modernist compositions, straight and angular, a reductionist pictorial model of an author, like in the paintings of Malevich. In these *Self-Portraits* - poems of Manuel Bandeira, Cecília Meireles, Manoel de Barros, Graciliano Ramos and Augusto Massi-, the artist searches for the (self) descriptions of these incontestable giants of poetry and prose. These works awaken our interest of knowing how these see themselves and how we see them, beyond their meaning, they are blind mirrors of their voices.

Modernism, or even better, the modernist voices also appear in another series, the Manifests one. In these, Rosana Ricalde appropriates herself of motifs which changed the course of Brazilian art, from the *Manifesto Antropofágico* of Oswald de Andrade, to the *Ruptura* Manifest, the *Neo-concreto* one, and at last, the *Objeto*, the last one belonging to the artist Waldemar Cordeiro. The first *Dada* Manifest also interests the artist and is associated to the Brazilian Manifests due to its historical and conceptual importance, as it just opened territory to all the other Manifests. The artist's interference is what becomes evident in all these works, erasing or highlighting the meaning of words, creating a semantic dislexy in the spectator.

In *Contra-poemas* the artist articulates existent antagonisms in language from the alteration of black and white backgrounds; in the field of reason, changes the meaning of poetry by substituting the poet's words by a poem composed of its antonyms. By substituting not only the words but also the meaning of action, the artist radically changes the meaning of the work of art. This mechanism of transforming meanings and significant is a constant in Ricalde's work. The visual game of the series of works *Provérbios* - works made in paintings with colored phrases to be read with colored glasses (in red or blue) is a real *gestalt*. The artist interferes meanings as we change from one color to the other, we visually “erase” letters and words which are seen

<sup>1</sup> Wittgenstein, Ludwig, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. São Paulo: Edusp, 1994

<sup>2</sup> Merleau-Ponty, Maurice, *Phenomenology of Perception*. São Paulo: Martins Fontes, 1999

<sup>3</sup> Merleau-Ponty, Maurice, *The Prose of the World*. São Paulo: Cosac & Naify, 2007

<sup>4</sup> Heidegger, Martin, *Being and Time*. Rio de Janeiro: Nova Fronteira, 1929

from a primary glance. The visual exchanges and the interferences in meanings are a manner which the artist found of opening the perception channel of the spectator. This *gestalt*, where the spectator can compose his or her final object, works as a random walk of the word for, as says Wittgenstein, words enunciate the world.

Linguistics and cartography are complementary in the work of Rosana Ricalde. World maps, globes, labyrinths, etc. are areas of topographical recognition, linguistic enunciates to answer the great ontological question. In *The Poetics of Space*<sup>5</sup>, Gaston Bachelard proceeded in his singular reflection about space, creating an analysis by elevating the object from his own analysis, in other words, places and spaces, in a poetical level. The favorite areas of men, such as home, the ceiling, the basement, the drawer, the vault, the wardrobe, the nest, the shell, etc. are spaces of profound intimacy. His poetry deepens the meaning of the metaphysical and psychological relationship of space about men. His poetry asks for and should be participated by attentive human beings, sensible, creative and opened to the possibility of dreaming. For Bachelard, day to day things should be redeemed by attention, to the new meaning that we must give them. They must be seen in their profoundness, for they are part of our most intimate perception.

“Onde será que isso começa / A correnteza sem paragem / O viajar de uma viagem / A outra viagem que não cessa / Cheguei ao nome da cidade / Não a cidade mesma espessa / Rio que não é Rio: imagens / Essa cidade me atravessa / Ôôôô êh boi êh bus / Será que tudo me interessa / Cada coisa é demais e tantas / Quais eram minhas esperanças / O que é ameaça e o que é promessa / Ruas voando sobre ruas / Letras demais, tudo mentindo / O Redentor que horror, que lindo / Meninos maus, mulheres nuas / Ôôôô êh boi êh bus / A gente chega sem chegar / Não há meada, é só o fio / Será que pra meu próprio Rio / Este Rio é mais mar que mar / Ôôôô êh boi êh bus / Sertão é mar. (Caetano Veloso).

“I wonder where this starts / The currents without stopping / The traveling of a voyage / The other voyage which never ends / I arrived in the name of the city / Rio which is not Rio: images / This city goes through me / Ôôôô êh boi êh bus / I wonder if everything interests me / Each thing is so much and how many / Which were my hopes / What is a threat and what is a promise / Streets flying over streets / Too many letters, everything lying / The Redeemer how horrible, how beautiful / Bag boys, naked women / Ôôôô êh boi êh bus / We arrive without arriving / There is no plot / Do you think that for my own Rio / This Rio is more sea than sea / Ôôôô êh boi êh bus / Midland é sea. (Caetano Veloso)

The vastness of the world is a theme which interests artists. Explored by the great universal authors - from *Grande Sertão: Veredas* by Guimarães Rosas to *Invisible Cities*, by Ítalo Calvino, vastness occupies the centre of all human preoccupations. It is only possible to know vastness as we go through our voyages. Trips through cities, sea or fluvial routes are memory spaces and these are Rosana Ricalde's real interests. In some works the artist creates an urban map composed of streets made out of words using Ítalo Calvino's text; in others she creates an imaginary letter written at sea from the trips of Marco Pólo, a labyrinth composed of a mixture of words to remember the oceanic routes travelled by the sailor. All of these are areas of recognition and loss, affection and sadness, stories and inventions, literature and the fantastic, discoveries and disappearances, life and death.

After all, road maps, urban maps, mariner cartography and the terrestrial globe are signs and forms of locating men. The artist uses them in a conceptual form, without forgetting the unavoidable plasticity of their forms. In this manner a series of sea drawings gains shades of blue, and rivers, shades of green. In the series *Mares*, from a first impression we see references to the Japanese artist Hokusai. The waves of Hokusai grow in an allusion to the sublime; the waves of Rosana Ricalde's seas are made of the river's own names: Aegean Sea, Red Sea, Mediterranean Sea, etc. written in filigrane. The currents of the Brazilian rivers are also made of their names. The seas and rivers of Rosana Ricalde have the lightness of Hokusai in form; the essence of the continual spirit of Nietzsche and the linguistic poetics of repetition of Guimarães Rosa.

Concluding these observations about the work of the artist I apprehend a very close reading of “I need these words written”, by Arthur Bispo do Rosário. As much as in Bispo do Rosário as in Rosana Ricalde we see a tremor of enunciation of everything which is present in the world, from places to people's names, whether men or women, their designations - poets, doctors, muses, anonymous people, nurses - beings of the story. We should see their works as an universal library, open, caring, as is Jorge Luis Borges. Englobing time, memory, people, places, she is the sequence of ideas of the real artist. By needing words written, Bispo do Rosário presents himself to the world; Rosana Ricalde presents the world. In both, there is truth in contemplating the world only by enunciating it.