



Memory, poetics, and politics. The use and disuse of objects

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Art, times / spaces

It is impossible to speak of art, times, and spaces without mentioning those actors who institute and inhabit them, for the concepts of this triad are thought by them and are indissociable and interconnected. As the experiences of art are not isotropic, these concepts are malleable and constitute themselves in a wide network of possibilities which can often be reconstituted. If space is concrete physical experience, it is also, and at the same time, the act or practice of place (CERTEAU, 1994), which enunciates it. In this way, experiences carry within themselves the notion of abstraction, of experience as an existential space in interaction with the world.

According to this view, it follows that existential experience, in non-linear time, transforms places into spaces and / or spaces into places, and reorganizes games and positions of force (CERTEAU, 1994; SERRES, 1998), drawing mutable relationships between human beings. It is what enables the possibility of freedom, by living the time of the creative, expressive and symbolic experience of art, manifested in concrete space, i.e. matter. We speak, then, of a topology in the manner of Michel Serres (1998), for whom space is created by movement, its paths and routes, and does not fit into a space of prior or abstract coordinates, but in intersectional links between multiple lines – foldable, sinuous, spiral, transverse lines that act on other forms of visibility – which leads us to think not in terms of 'space' itself but of the plurality of possible spaces.

Serres's topology expands this thinking by accepting time and space in its non-linear dynamics. Sometimes embracing the closed, inside; sometimes embracing the open, outside; sometimes, the intervals, the between, the forward direction, backward direction, transversal, without prior order; sometimes, proximity and adherence (near, over, against, next, together), immersion (between, under), di-

mension: thus successively encountering all realities without measure and relationally. This malleability of the spaces / places, as well as the artistic act of making, occurs in a certain chronological time, but also exists outside of that time, since it can be subjectivated. There are also places that link the present to the past.¹ It is in this sense that Michel de Foucault (1967) constructs his concept of "temporal heterotopia". Places where different times coexist. In a similar manner, it is in this uncertain movement of times and spaces that the aesthetic, imaginative, and communicative human activity of art is realized, by a great variety of languages and in different combinations. Moreover, beyond to its preoccupation with languages, contemporary art problematizes, thinks, lives and materializes in subjective spaces / places / times. Often, in opposition to the instituted senses.

The disuse of the rational machine

In February of the current year I had the pleasure of stripping, in Marilena Chaui's (1979, 18) formulation, "the skin of the body of the other's work" in its plural dimension of subjective times / spaces. I saw, felt and immersed myself in the universe of the exhibition *Desuso*, by the artist Selma Parreira (in the gallery of the Faculty of Visual Arts [FAV / UFG]), one stage in her unfolding project *Machina: memory and poetics of spaces and objects*.

Before talking about this project, let us get to know a little about the trajectory of the artist, who began her career in 1980, initially as a painter. Selma gained prominence in the Brazilian national scene in that decade, when the artistic-cultural movement intensified in the Central-West region, moving apart from the Rio-São Paulo axis.

¹ We can take as an example the spaces / places of the museum and the work of art that, despite being produced in a certain time and chronological space, transit in time without necessarily belonging to the past or the present.



Fig. 1 – Selma Parreira, W/T, acrylic, 1985. Photo: Paulo Rezende.

A painter, recorder and illustrator, Selma studied design and plastic arts at the Institute of Arts of the Federal University of Goiás (1975-1979), and metal engraving at Institute Allende Guanajuato in Mexico (1979). She participated in several exhibitions, among them the 3rd Brazil-Japan Painting Exhibition of the Mokiti Okada Foundation, Goiânia, 1981 (Fig. 1); National Salon of Arts of Goiânia, 1984 (Prize D. J. Oliveira); Salon 1990, Paris, France, 1990; Itaú Cultural Exhibition: BR / 80 Painting Brazil Decade 80, at Itaú Cultural Gallery in Brasília, Rio de Janeiro and Goiânia, 1991 (Fig. 2 and 3); 3rd Biennial of Arts of Goiás, in the Museum of Contemporary Art of Goiânia, 1993 (Fig. 4).



Fig. 2 – Selma Parreira. Blender, acrylic, 1985. Photo: Paulo Rezende.

After a period without producing new work, Selma unveiled *Myths and Territories* (2003-2004, as an artist and project coordinator) in the cities of Porto Alegre, Goiânia, Belo Horizonte, and São Paulo. Also in 2003, she participated in the 3rd National Salon of Art of Goiás, and in 2004 in the CELG Salon, where she received the Painting Prize. In 2005, she participated in the exhibition *Photography Goiana Contemporânea*, held in Brasília and Goiânia.



Fig. 3 – Selma Parreira. W/T. Acrylic, 1988. Photo: Paulo Rezende.

In 2006, she presented the individual *Lugares Seguros*, at the Marina Potrich Gallery (Goiânia, GO) and participated in the *Água e Memória* collective in the city of Goiás as part of the 8th International Environmental Film Festival (Goiás Velho, GO). In 2007, she presented the individual *O Jantar* at the University Museum of the Federal University of Uberlândia, MG, and a video installation of the same name, *O Jantar*, at the 3rd Festicine – Goiânia.



Fig. 4 – Selma Parreira. W/T. III Bienal de Goiás. Painting Award. Museu de Arte Contemporânea – MAC, 1993. Photo:

In the same year she curated *Fragmentos do corpo* and *Umas ideias*, both in the Gallery of FAV – UFG. In 2008, she made the public intervention *Lençóis esquecidos no Rio Vermelho* in the city of Goiás – GO (MINC / IPHAN). In 2009, again in the city of Goiás, she carried out an urban intervention in Rio Vermelho, a specific site sponsored by the arts and heritage Funarte and Petrobrás (Fig. 5).



Fig. 5 – Selma Parreira. Public intervention. "Lençóis esquecidos no Rio Vermelho" in Cidade de Goiás – GO (MINC/IPHAN), 2008. Photo: Paulo Rezende.

In 2011, under the same name, she made an installation and video at the Museum of Image and Sound – MIS-GO. The same work was also presented at Dragão do Mar Cultural Center, Fortaleza, CE. In 2012, an exhibition of engravings, "As Galinhas e outras coisas", was held in Café Pireneus, Goiânia. In 2013, the installation "Uma pedra Azul e um rio vermelho" was held at Galeria Cañizares / UFBA in Salvador / Bahia.



Fig. 6– Selma Parreira. Luzalina. Photo, 1988. Photo: Paulo Rezende.

In 2014, "A dor e os segredos" was exhibited at the Museum of Art of Goiânia – MAG (Fig. 6). Her biography and works are currently on the Encyclopedia Itaú Cultural website² and she has been teaching at the Faculdade de Artes Visuais – FAV since 1993.

In 2015, she created the *Machina* project (subtitled *memory and poetics of spaces and objects* [Fig. 7]) from a potential drive load. By this I mean the drive³ of memories retained as perceptions and reactions experienced in the past, which is permeated by an infinity of signs announcing ancient images. This drive allows the artist to see, feel, think with and in her body, on the border between the mental and the somatic, in addition to material objects, nevertheless, from her own materialities.

² In: ENCICLOPEDIA Itaú Cultural of Brazilian Art and Culture. São Paulo: Itaú Cultural, 2017. Available at: <<http://enciclopedia.itaucultural.org.br/evento83913/salao-nacional-de-artes-plasticas-de-goiania-1984-goiania-go>>. Accessed on: May 03, 2017.

³Both Sigmund Freud (1916) and Jacques Lacan (1998) conceptualize the frontier between the mental and the somatic as the psychic representative of a stimulus that originates in the body.



Fig. 7 – Selma Parreira. W/T. Mixed technique (Encaustic and oil), 2014. Photo: Paulo Rezende.

Such is the path of the drive. Its representatives only know it via the ideative representative and the affective charge (LACAN, 1998). The latter corresponds to the processes of discharge, whose final manifestations are perceived as feelings. They are felt consciously, although we cannot determine the origin of affects when feeling their manifestation. The ideative representatives are cathexes, basically of memory traces.

Neither ideative representatives nor affects are chained to chronologically demarcated times and spaces, since they transit between the symbolic and the real. In the symbolic of art, the artist, divided, is in connection and disjunction with the demand of the other. In the real, it becomes its object and travels around the object, to circumscribe it in non-verbal language.

Thus, memory has a decisive function in the total psychological process. It is this which allows the relation of the present body to the past and simultaneously interferes in the process of the representations that are constituted today. Through memory, states Henri Bergson (1999), the past comes to the surface in the torrential movement of the present waters, mixing with the immediate perceptions, displacing the previous ones, and occupying the whole space of consciousness. "Memory appears as a force subjective, profound and active, latent and penetrating, hidden and invasive" (BERGSON, 1999, p. 183).

Since 2014, Selma Parreira – under this force – has selected and registered objects in the old sheds of Arrozeira Boa Safra, in Anápolis, GO, through photographs, drawings, paintings, and video related to the fragments of her memory (Fig. 8). In her selection, the artist prioritizes what "tells the history of the place, objects almost always impregnated with personal memories, diverse feelings ...", and in them sees much poetry.



Fig. 8 – Arrozeira Boa Safra, in Anápolis, 2014. Photo: Paulo Rezende.

In speaking about this process, Selma states:

[...] I feel like a receptor filter that seeks and receives feelings, sensations. They are images and information that mix with my imaginary and restlessness. It is from this junction of reality and imagination that it detonates my process of creation. Time, memory and other momentary interests act as waves for new clippings and directions of the works, they are like lenses that sharpen, measure, and focus my perception and critique of my world.

In this esthetic act of configuring the experience, the artist has as partner the photographer Antônio Ambrósio Bandeira. He began to accompany her in the space of the Galpão da Arroeira while researching and interested in recording actions in space as well as the historical and conceptual issues in Selma's work.

The established meaning of machinic space

For five decades, the work space of Mr. Gercílio Rodrigues da Silva (1891-1989) and his sons Anazir Rodrigues da Silva (1925 – 2016) and Alicio Rodrigues da Silva (1927- 2014) was the old central area of the city of Anápolis, GO. Coming from Buriti Alegre, GO, they settled there in 1957. Among their luggage, they brought their work experiences of handling dry and wet processing machines for rice and coffee in a small warehouse.

At that time, the central area of the city of Anápolis united a concentration of warehouses, cerealists, and the commerce of dry and wet. There the men of the city went, day after day, to this place staging their work for a dignified life. A space of good and honorable men, who fed themselves and their families with the fruits gathered from the work done by hands calloused in handling the machines, sacks and managing people. Thus, the machines, their procedures and techniques, engendered shared experiences in symbolic spaces of respect, unity, collaboration, and sociability. A common pact rooted in a ritualistic scenario– conscious of its historical dimension as struggle for survival – in social interaction.

Anthropologist Nei Clara de Lima (e-mail, 2016) recalls:

The machines processing rice, replacing the old manual pestles and the monjolos, touched with spout water, came to Goiás, in the main years 1950 and 1960. By that time, the small agricultural producers took their family's production to the machines in the cities individually, in the cities, to have the rice peeled and ready for consumption.

Mr. Gercílio was, along with his children, one of these social actors. Owner of the company Gercilio Rodrigo & Filhos, later Arroeira Boa Safra, active until the mi-

d-1980s. In that decade, already in charge of the company, his son Anazir Rodrigues saw, step by step, the trade transformed. Abruptly, in the 1990s, he shared with various others a social drama, as the politics of Fernando Collor de Mello's government (1990-1992) turned towards bilateral and multilateral trade agreements. For André Averbug (1999), the period that followed – with the opening to foreign trade under this government and that of Fernando Henrique Cardoso (1995 to 2003) – was the scene of great changes in the politics of control of the production and trade in grain in the country.⁴ These changes led to the bankruptcy of a large number of small and medium-sized cereal producers from Annapolis and, consequently, to the closure of the doors of their establishments.

Nei Clara de Lima (e-mail, 2016) explains:

As modernizing time is also a machine that wants to level and homogenize everything by the capitalist market's compressor roller, new economic and social changes occurred in the last decades of the twentieth and early twenty-first century. It is the economy of large conglomerates, supermarkets, shopping centers, franchises of various products, undermining the initiatives of small and medium traders and service providers. In this system, small and medium-sized enterprises disappear, such as dry and wet warehouses, fabric stores, grain-processing machines, among others, which formed, in the cities undergoing urbanization, a service network between small farmers, traders and small traders, seamstresses, tailors and so on.

This, therefore, is a social drama that opens a cleft on the daily life of this period. It is the conflict, the latent tension produced in social life, by contradictory structural principles, not directly grasped by the consciousness of social actors. Tension and conflict, however, pressure their conduct in divergent directions (TURNER, 1974 [1969]). A good example is the attitude of Mr. Anazir when, in the 90's, disgusted with the economic situation, he left his son Anazir Rodrigues da Silva Junior in the administration of "Arrozeira Boa".

Later, the other son of Mr. Gercílio, Alicio, decided to start again by dedicating himself to new activities in agriculture and livestock on his farm near Pirenópolis / GO. Today, almost all the warehouses in the center of Anápolis are deactivated with respect to their original functions. Selma Parreira, daughter of Anazir Rodrigues, says that "many of these warehouses have been demolished, but most are

⁴ The objective was Brazil's integration into a new world order, through the process known as globalization, based on the so-called "New Regionalism" which is characterized by the integration of countries through bilateral and multilateral trade agreements (free trade zones, customs unions, and common markets) (AVERBUG, 1999).

destined for various occupations and automatically subject to the erasure of their history" (oral interview, February 2, 2016).

Over time, people transform places by recreating them according not only to their needs but, above all, to the demands of the dynamics of social life, which according to Victor Turner (1974 [1969]) demand new performances to heal the social drama. They are individuals creating spaces that, in turn, create individuals at different times. This is the course of history, pointed out by Nei Clara de Lima (e-mail, 2016), when he clarifies:

With the modernizing passage of time, machines are being gradually replaced. The pestles and monjolos of farms, of craft technology and use of human energy and water, were practically exchanged for grain processing warehouses, especially rice. By being exchanged, those machines become obsolete. The rural universes are changing and the majority of the population takes the direction of the cities. In this transformation, the rural environment is also modernizing, with the predominance of agriculture business in the exploration of land.

In the face of the unfolding new world, Selma uses childhood memories and contemplates this machinic space to deepen her investigation into a visual poetics focused on memory, history, place, and work. However, without nostalgia.

What to do with an inheritance?

In 2000, Selma received merchandise from an estate of her family. Objects and obsolete things from the Armazém Feliz, stored in the basement of her grandfather's paternal home. The Armazém Feliz was the first module deactivated in the late 1980s and belonging to the conglomerate of warehouses. Among these objects, several indigo stones were kept for almost fifteen years and found in sealed packages in the estate of the Armazém Feliz.

What to do with this intense blue color? From her childhood memories – indigo stones used by the washerwomen to rinse the clothes – the functioning of the sensitive, creative and subjective "machine" of art making has re-emerged. Selma says that a series of seven works were conceived from the poetic possibilities of the indigo rock, culminating in the last installation of photographic/audio objects (twenty in total), titled *A Dor e os Segredos* (2014). In it, the artist explored the poetics of the objects in disuse, and the working relation of the women with the community and mistresses.

From 1999, Selma investigated the actions practiced, the objects, and the daily lives lived by nine anonymous women who maintained their houses by washing clothes in the Rio Vermelho River, in the city of Goiás. The artist was impressed with the suffered, mistreated hands of the washerwomen – their only instrument of work, marked by the daily struggles of their profession.



Fig. 9 –Public installation, 2009. Photo: Paulo Rezende.

They washed 60 to 80 pieces of clothing each day. They arrived in the morning and returned late in the afternoon. With the money earned, they bought a liter of lard, another of rice, a strip of rib, and sometimes milk. Today they complain of problems in the spine coldness in the legs, and rheumatism and injuries to the hands. (PARREIRA, oral interview, February 2, 2016).

The first work of the series happened in 2001 using anil stone. In it, the artist (re) articulated what touched her in the sensitivity of the inheritance: the blue stones of indigo. She created an installation called *Luzalina*, where intense blue indigo stones were carved, such as precious stones, and were mounted on a collection of fourteen silver rings, displayed in small acrylic boxes. Also on display was a single photograph, in black and white, of female hands wearing a ring. For these hands, a silver ring studded with indigo stone became a symbol of female vanity lost in the depths of the waters due to the profession of these anonymous women.

In 2008, the artist returned to the theme. Around 3 o'clock in the morning at the Carmo Bridge in the city of Goiás, together with the washerwomen, she extended precarious indigo sheets at the door of the São Pedro Hospital (Fig. 9). The idea was to register changes in the river and in the place provoked by the urban intervention. The next year, 2009, Selma held the *Lençóis esquecidos no Rio Vermelho*.

In this ontological exhibition, the artist used sheets, basins, and indigo stones. In 2013, she made a new installation, entitled *Uma Pedra Azul e um Rio Vermelho: poética e memória dos objetos*. The exhibition brought together photos, installation, and video. It showed a set of performance records with blue indigo stone, facilities made up of objects (silver and indigo rings), and works carried out around the Rio Vermelho, in the city of Goiás, GO.

The strangeness of the population and the desire of the artist to bring to light the secrets and outbursts of the washerwomen gave rise to a total of twenty audio-photographic objects in an installation titled *A dor e os segredos* (2014). To accomplish this, Selma initially selected nine women. Then an audio team collected the testimonies of seven washerwomen (since two of them, out of shyness, did not want to participate in this part of the show). In the photographic installation, held at the Goiás Art Museum, MAG, two audio points in the room transmitted the sounds of the washerwomen's narratives.

The use of objects and poetic disuse

The first artwork from the research in the machine sheds was presented in 2014, in the exhibition *Sintomas estéticos do plural*, a collective in the FAV-UFG Gallery. In this show Selma exhibited an installation composed of photographic narratives and a painting, entitled *Cerealista BC | 1008* in reference to the address of the shed, Benjamin Constant Street 1008. After this moment, the artist began to make weekly visits to the shed in Anápolis and produced drawings, notes, and photographs that form an important bank of images for the development of paintings.

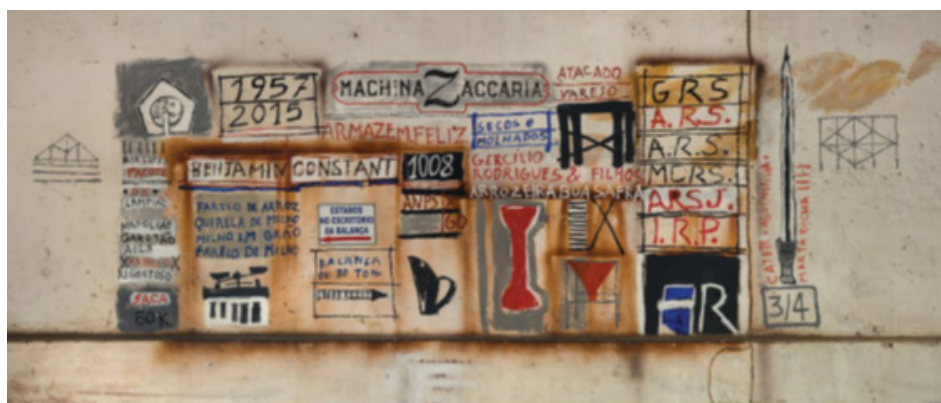


Fig. 10 – Selma Parreira. W/T. Mixed technique, in the wall of the shed Cerealista Boa Safra, 2016. Photo: Paulo Rezende.

Beyond to the exhibition *Desuso* (2016), fourteen paintings were made from abstractions of objects found in the Cerealista Boa Safra shed. Also, two other artistic actions were created: a large-format painting on one of the walls of the shed's physical space (Fig. 10), and a painting performance video recorded and photographed by Antônio Bandeira (Fig. 11). For Selma Parreira (oral interview, 2016), the solo exhibition *Desuso* was the first product and launch of the *Machina* project.

The poetics of images have this power, which is to speak of things that touch us, that "burn with the real" (DIDI-HUBERMAN, 2012, 216). Deep things, sometimes painful about a world that no longer exists. The pictorial images of *Desuso* create visibilities, articulate memories, and maintain them in another time, in another space. Perhaps this is the fate of images – to revive the fire of what makes us human.

I think that the thinking of Jacques Rancière (2009, 17) follows this track when he speaks of "the practices of visibility of art, of the place they occupy, of what they do with respect to the common" as a political aesthetic. In Selma's esthetic and political experience, her mode of subjectivation, her quality of feeling, and expertise in doing, unveil other possible spaces and times. In art practices accompanied by an exercise in sensitivity and imagination – and we know from Didi-Huberman (2012) that without imagination there are no images – what Selma does is give life to the image, remembering, through her imagination, a time lived and shared with countless workers.

According to the artist, "the marks on the walls and floor, the numerous obstructed doors and windows and light traces that penetrate the grandiose and elaborate covering have become the primordial matter of my visual poetic production" (oral interview, February 2, 2016); she refers to people, situations, memories, and affects, passed in a time that no longer exists and in a modified space, therefore another.

To work with issues related to space / time, its dimensions, wear and tear, architectural features and marks of the various occupations, for more than half a century that my father and other relatives there lived together [...] is to bring to the works recodifications my memories of the place, the workers and the Machines with their noises and functions that caused me fascination, challenge and fear. (PARREIRA, oral interview, February 2, 2016).



Fig. 11 – Selma Parreira. Mural on the wall of the shed Cerealista Boa Safra, 2016. Photo: Paulo Rezende.

The images, paintings of the exhibition *Desuso*, speak in a very singular way of the end of a space / time period, of its customs, behaviors and values, as expressed by Lima (e-mail, 2016):

The machines and furniture that served this system, which I am ideally considering as an intermediary between the rural and the urban world, are currently experiencing their obsolescence. They are no longer useful, they no longer respond in any economic (and also social) way, except in very rare situations of small localities that have not yet undergone the complete passage of modernizing time. They are in disuse: the machines to process rice, the sewing machines, the mannequins of tailors, the display of fabrics, the warehouses of varied products.

From the wreckage of that time, Selma removes pictorial signs that make visible the Goiana cultural performance and sheds light on what we possess as humans: the capacity to imagine, to feel and to symbolize (Fig. 12).

In as much as esthetic experience, like the artistic process itself, has its existence in peculiar ways of perceiving the world, the artist speaks of herself, of her time, and "perceives the intimate and secret relation of things" (BAUDELAIRE, 1996, 329). A relationship that echoes in the body of the other.

Having lived in part through those times, these changes led me to recall childhood, and playing in the mountains of rice straw, stimulated by the evocative designs of old warehouses to process rice, their machines in a silence of rust, their lofts letting in the beams of light, the walls marked by writings of another time, as if to stop the modernizing time [...] These, the drawings I saw in the exhibition *Desuso*, by Selma Parreira (Fig. 13). The warehouse for shelling

Anápolis rice, parchment of the transformed time, infuses the stored mountain of childhood memories. Playing with designs, colors and shapes. Selma has the power to scratch inside us. She always searches, She always seeks – in the verdigris of us – a loving recomposition of the lived time.

It is, therefore, in the sharing of a collective memory of a common experience of time / living space that Selma's artistic activity is inscribed "inside us." Beyond this sensitive cut of everyday life, art – in its aesthetic and political depth – establishes its very own ways of problematizing, feeling, criticizing, and relating to its times / spaces.



Fig. 12 – Selma Parreira. W/T, 2016. Photo: Paulo Rezende.



Fig. 13 – Selma Parreira. W/T. Mixed media (acrylic and encaustic) 2016. Photo: Paulo Rezende.

Under the ashes

In times of shattering experience due to the speed of communication – in many different media – places and spaces are liquefied without first becoming real⁵ (Fig. 13). In this scenario the exhibition *Desuso* opens a crack through which it glimpses signs that were in no hurry to constitute themselves and organize subjectively the lived experiences of the artist's childhood. Selma recognizes the importance of experience, so well announced by Walter Benjamin (1996), so as not to die in the poverty of barbarism. She goes in the opposite direction of the annihilation of experience, once synonymous with wisdom and authority, consolidated through transmission from generation to generation, proper to a collective, communitarian, ritualistic, and artisanal organization. Revives the fire of the drive / memory that burns under the ashes. Selma does not regret or criticize the degradation of experience in modernity. She does more: she strips off the skin of her body to show in raw flesh the experience lived as memory and transposes it into signs that will last. This is political action.

⁵I consider the subjective as one of the categories of the real.

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