

HELOISA SCHNEIDERS DA SILVA: OBRA E ESCRITOS, ORGANIZED BY MÔNICA ZIELINSKY

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How is the “life of the artist” built nowadays, in a time marked by an infinite array of linguistic possibilities and by the constant debate on the parameters that governed modern art from the late 19th century to the beginning of the post-war period? A possible answer is suggested by Calvin Tomkins in the preface of *As vidas dos artistas* (*The lives of the artists*, 2009): to see in art, among other things, an approach to living.

The American critic’s proposal echoes paradigmatically in the book *Heloisa Schneiders da Silva: obra e escritos* (or *Heloisa Schneiders da Silva: work and writings*), 2010, which includes two essays — one from the volume’s organizer Mônica Zielinsky and the other by Gaudêncio Fidelis — a documental section, an excellent chronology, and also reproductions of the artist’s works and pictures from the late 1970s to 2005, year she passed away.

Heloisa Schneiders da Silva, as shown by the authors of both essays, occupies a unique place in Brazilian art, as she seeks for “other spaces” that point beyond her work. Zielinsky and Fidelis therefore emphasize the need to establish new parameters in order to approach the trajectory of an artist constantly transiting through languages, not satisfied in adhering to trends so dear to the market, always in search of an interior truth. With this search as her own personal mark, Heloisa Schneiders da Silva does not show any concern with the establishment of a hermetic style. On the contrary, she experiments the different possibilities offered by the contemporary world of art, not guided by exclusivities or delimited areas of performance. The artist simultaneously experiments (with collective works, postal art, artist books) and discusses the art circuit and concepts of art and makes intimist drawings in which she tests the relations between line, color and plane (during the late 1970s). When she treads through painting (during the 1980s), she is guided by an experimental purpose. An opening to “fiction”, as Mônica Zielinsky

points out in regards to the series dedicated to wolves, characterized by a wide pictorial gesture and by construction of the painting in chromatic layers, is parallel to her interest in investigating the support structure. When analyzing this aspect, Fidelis refers to “a process of organic transubstantiation”, rooted on a judicious choice of materials, which are submitted to an “affective test” before being incorporated to the work.

This attitude becomes more radical in the period when Heloisa Schneiders da Silva lived in Buenos Aires (1985-1992). At that time, she intensely questions the pictorial plane in works that challenge the limits between painting, object and sculpture. For Zielinsky, the “paintings-objects” of this period are the result of a review of the idea of art that had guided her actions until then. In touch with this new environment, the artist opens up to suggestions from reading the works of Joaquín Torres García and the praxis of *Grupo Madí*, which allows her to return to her reflection on the thresholds of art, rehearsed in Porto Alegre during the 1970s. Averse to the neoexpressionist trend of the 1980s, Heloisa Schneiders da Silva tries to trace her own path, made of formal economy, visual discretion and chromatic subtleties and characterized by the presence of a constructive will even in her tenser works.

Holding to the belief that the artist learns by doing, Heloisa Schneiders da Silva takes her wish for recovering the “primitive relation of man with the world in contemporary civilization” to the field of education. This purpose is in the base of her disenchantment with the academy and her decision to abandon the faculty of the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul. A lot was learned in the “student-professor relation” and in the “fragile relation” with colleagues, but she could not accept the restrictions imposed by the university bureaucracy, and asked to terminate her role in the Institute of Arts in June, 1980.

However, this did not mean she had a disbelief in teaching. On the contrary, she explores the possibilities offered by what Mônica Zielinsky calls “spaces for training” in shared workshops discussing the artistic process in its various implications — as mental elaboration and as doing. This is demonstrated in Three Work Processes, workshop carried out at the Goethe Institute in Porto Alegre, in collaboration with Michael Chapman. Another example is her partnership with Karin Lambrecht in *The Room* (1984-1985). When characterizing Heloisa Schneiders da Silva and her fellows’ work philosophy, Zielinsky points to the adoption of an inexistent posture in the university before the creation of graduation programs: a concern in establishing “articulations between reflection and doing through the practice of art”.

The artist, remaining voluntarily in the margin of the main perspectives of her time, rethinks in her own terms the message encoded in Marcel Duchamp's *The great glass*. As emphasized by both essays in the book, the painting on glass in a window in Bonn is a direct consequence of her trip to Philadelphia in 1980. The creation of a pictorial landscape that dialogues with the real landscape is a unique experience, also presenting broader relations with her poetics, frequently marked by the absence of discriminations between front and back of a painting. While Fidelis questions "to which measure the Duchampian *nature* inhabited Heloisa", Zielinsky affirms there is no similarity between the two creative processes, but also mentions she becomes aware of the importance of an artist's writings, sparked by the contact with the Frenchman's work. Both essayists often resort to Heloisa Schneiders da Silva's writings in order to corroborate the vision of an artist aware of the vital processes and creative praxis, who finds in this confluence the possibility of "inventing herself", recalling another of Tomkins' argument.

Even starting from different premises — Zielinsky traces a chronological-critical profile of the artist's trajectory while Fidelis mainly discusses her insertion in the context of the 1980s — both texts present significant analytical convergences that allow the detection of certain nuclear aspects of reflection on contemporary art in Brazil. Always stimulating and filled with conceptual openings, Zielinsky and Fidelis' chapters are a double invitation. They stimulate increasing knowledge of a body of work that had little visibility due to the artist's idiosyncrasies and the art market's shortsightedness. They urge to rethink the parameters that rule the difficult conception of an art history not restricted anymore to a small number of established names and not confined anymore to a small number of geographical locations.

REFERENCE

ZIELINSKY, Mônica (Ed.). *Heloisa Schneiders da Silva: obra e escritos*. Porto Alegre: Associação dos Amigos do Museu de Arte do Rio Grande do Sul, 2010.



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