SCENERY, UNFOLDINGS AND CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVES, MARIA AMELIA BULHÕES AND MARIA LÚCIA BASTOS KERN, EDITORS

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Paisagem: desdobramentos e perspectivas contemporâneas, or *Scenery, unfoldings and contemporary perspectives* (Editora da UFRGS, 2010, pp.303), by many researchers, organized by Maria Amélia Bulhões and Maria Lúcia Bastos Kern, offers us a set of reflexions on the relations between historical concepts of scenery and artistic productions.

In the first part, which deals with *Conceptual Unfoldings* (Desdobramentos Conceituais), Javier Maderuelo shows us that the idea of scenery as we know it is a modern phenomena once comparatives are not found in earlier times, and when they are, the word for them lacks a whole meaning. Thus scenery is understood much more as a *contemplative look from he who looks* than as the territory. The scenery as a cultural concept subjected to singularities of each time already evidenced — even if precariously — in the old Roman empire, but was delayed in almost a millennium because of Christianity. From its background revival at Renaissance until the Baroque times, the concept little developed itself up to Romanticism and the formulation of a new philosophical/aesthetical category: the sublime. But, as the author recollects, Romanticism brings about the concept of Pitoresque and bucolic scenery, which, far from being scary, presents itself as welcoming. In the end, the author approaches the brief modernist negation of scenery by the romance with machines and the city until its plain recuperation by Land-art and Earth-works in order to remember us that cultivation, cult and culture all bear a common origin from which we withdraw the energies that feed our sight so as to transform nature in scenery. In the second part, *The scenery seen through a historical perspective* (A paisagem em perspectiva histórica), Rodrigo Gutiérrez presents some unique qualities of the relation between scenery painting and the latin-american history and culture in the XIX and XX centuries as a consequence of the transformations occurred in european territories.

Discarding stereotyped comparisons such as *Europe X America* or *Tradition X Modernity*, the author presents relation and unfolding lines like the european scientificist interest and its repercussion about the records of the exuberant nature of the new earth. He also emphasizes the romantic influence that finds in these distant realms the inspiration for not only exploring the scenery but also other themes dear to motion, like the exotic and the primitive. In the end, the author brings up the latin-american relations between scenery and identity on analyzing the transformations produced in this artistic concept by the machine, the industry, the natives influences and, last but not least, social concerns. Alexandra Kennedy-Troya, on her turn, presents an essay in which, focusing on the years between 1850 and 1920 in Ecuador, she attempts to showcase the relations between fiction and foundationing visualities and the idea of territory, being this one related to the knowledge of local geography and agriculture. Nationalism, estate, politics, literature and visual arts are shown as contaminated by the territory and its topography in an essay that helps the understanding of what is usually called *latin-american identity*. Claudia Valladão de Mattos reminds the reader of the inappropriateness which is to suppose the environmental critics to be a contemporary phenomena. The author proves such an affirmation on expliciting the relations between the knowledge of XIX century's relevant artists, politics and intellectuals and the debates and critics about the environmental damage that progress was causing to the local lush. Notice the important Taunay and Araújo Porto-Alegre.

In the third part, *Scenery Poetics* (Poéticas da Paisagem), Maria Lúcia Bastos Kern approaches the scenery in Uruguayan artist Torres-García's work as a *lieux de memoire*, and in the work of Argentinian artist Xul-Solar as imaginary and mystic. With eloquence in writing, the author interestingly presents the power of Catalan nationalism in the scenery-wise conception of Torres García. In a concrete and instructional way, the influence of *Mediterranean ways* and *Eugenio D'Ors cultural program* are exposed as adopted by the Uruguayan artist, such as the religious influence and detachment of the St. Lucas Artistic Circle in its vanguardist conception. Such exposition offers the reader a historical and geographical immersion detailed where artistic analysis are also present. Vinicius Oliveira Godoy, on his turn, seeks to demonstrate the recurring appearance of scenery in artist Iberê Camargo's drawings and the limitations of its representative possibilities in which scenery and memory are joined in the construction of the artistic modernity of one of the greatest Brazilian painters. Gloria Ferreira, on her turn, analyses the works of North-American sculptor Walter De Maria, emphasizing the linkage

made by the artist between scenery themes and the perception of an invisible and spiritual reality. For this end, De Maria elaborated an idea of piece of art that is able to conduct the spectator to a level of experience that possibilites the remembrance of “the power of the motions that run through nature” — as the author affirms. Maria Angélica Melendi, on her turn, builds up a text with a refreshing approach, talking of gardens as non-painted sceneries, introducing the reader to the Bosco Sacro idealized by Prince Pier-Francesco Orsini (1213-84), whose comprehension demands from the visitor at least some knowledge on Dante's, Petrarca's and Ariosto's poetry. Monet's garden is also mentioned along the relation between gardening and painting, right before the end of this journey of an essay, which mentions Little Sparta, the poem/garden created amidst the swamp by Scottish poet Ian Hamilton Finlay.

The fourth and last part, *Digital Poetics and Scenery Questions*, offers the reader a rich introduction that allows the understanding how contemporary artistic productions developed and designed for digital places widen up even more the concept of scenery. Iliana Hernández García investigates the heuristic of virtual spaces, saying that artificial life, contrariwise to earthly life, presents itself as a system open to questions and never to representations of already received answers. To this end, the author talks about projects such as Sommerer and Mignonneau's, which show a system of organic abstract shapes modified by the actions of human beings towards the computer system; Rejane Cantoni's and Daniela Kutschat's project, called OP_ERA, in which the body takes part in changes that succeed in space from a system of interface tracing; and works of other artists such as Maurice Benayoun, Jeffrey Shaw and Marcos Novak. Claudia Paim and Ulises Ferretti approach scenery from the field of sound experimentations of its futurist origins, mentioning John Cage, Westerkamp & Andra McCartney and Pierre Schaeffer, and finally emphasizing the piece *Duplo Coro*, their own work, originally conceived for Porto Alegre's water department garden.

André Parente, on his turn, conceptually discusses the scenery from space to cipherspace, analyzing the relations between time (or rapidness) and topologies, emphasizing that time, by being constituted with space, on being altered in topologies, amplifies the possibilities of experiences and knowledge through heterotopies. To illustrate that, the author analyzes his own projects and those of other artists, such as Jean-Luc Boissier, Matt Mullican and Monika Fleishmann. Sandra Rey, on her turn, approaches her own project, *DesDOBRamentos da paisagem: um processo artístico com base na fotografia digital* (Scenery UnFOLDings: an artistic process based on digital photography), in which the concept of displacement finds itself

permeated by experiences, actions and experimentations established in determined territories or places. In these experiences, processes and projects, independent and codependent, define themselves in the “track” of a practice, of a register not only of space but also of the producing existence of archives whose experimentation generates images that amplifies and resizes historiographic concepts for scenery. In the last essay of the whole, Maria Amelia Bulhões, in differentiating the simple displacement of the act of travelling, threads a reflection on the widening of the concept of scenery by contemporary means of visual apprehension of micro and macroscopic territories appeased by experiences and propositions of contemporary art. As the author seeks to emphasize, these artistic experiences, in a numeric image that hides from the straight relation with geographic territories, are open to transformations in themselves by the hands of the visitor. Also evidenced are the new possibilities to relate the scenery appeased by contemporary art through immersive proposes and diving into the image that alters the relation of the spectator with the ambient, exemplified through the works of artists such as Nelson Max, Jean Boissier, Gilberto Prado, Stephan Barron, André Parente, Michael Aschauer, Joseph Lefèvre & Martina Koutnoyan, Adriaan Stellingwerff and Lozano Hemmer.

Thus, *Scenery, unfoldings and contemporary perspectives*, by its variety of approaches, offers itself to the reader as an elegant prism which allows not only a historical comprehension of one of the most important themes and concepts in western art, but also its survival and transformation nowadays. From the different looks exposed there, a conviction stays that the relevance of spiritual, social and cultural significance of scenery, just as its present, is given by the symbolic power of allowing the men to feel like a part of the world and thus, less estranged and solitary. In the end, it is important to remember that the book also brings with it an Image Archive of colored pictures which help the neophytes to understand.

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