

## The Strange Beauty and the Beauty of the Strange<sup>1</sup>

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Translated by Ana Carolina Azevedo and Bruno Declerque

**Abstract:** In this article, we seek to draw some observations on the career of the artist Luiz Gonzaga, from our reception to the exhibition of his works at the event *Percurso do Artista*, in 2014. We seek to associate life and work without worrying about collecting detailed and chronological biographical data, more like a biographeme, as Barthes tells us, since it is hardly possible for a man's biography to be fully apprehended. The path of the artist reveals itself as his creative and narrative drive, standing out as an expression of the failure of his achievements, since, even if he is satisfied with his last achievement, he finds himself compelled to tell once more, to seek in his anxieties answers that he knows will always be incomplete to the silences that populate him and the world. Thus, to tell an artist's life would be to affirm this love to the strange by him nurtured and which ceases to be by becoming his own fuel.

**Keywords:** Luiz Gonzaga; Life and Artwork

### I - A BEAUTY, QUITE AND CALM, AS THE WAIT AND THE PROMISE

For years, I have been living alongside magnificent sculptures by Gonzaga. They fill spaces in my house, helping composing it with a diverse collection of a small array of works by different artists. As silent presences in the daily life of the family, they receive curious glances from people who visit us. At such moments, we also look at them, lingeringly, sometimes touching and caressing them, retaining in us their beautiful texture and colors, again and again. The warmth of our breath suspends them in an aura. By the images we capture with our eyes, we are again, in those moments, dragged by the strange beauty of such figures, to the farthest that surrounds them, for the duration that emanates from them. What we look at, also looks back at us, throwing us silent and atmospheric shots that reanimate our enchantment and reveal surprises reserved in their materiality. Quiet and still,

Gonzaga's great figures leap over our steps as if waiting for their disenchantment. They await, patiently, for their new dawn, respecting the night we impose on them by the quotidian that afflicts us. Imposing and respectable, they stand in the house as reservoirs of affections and extended perceptions. They contemplate us in our daily life, hoping, perhaps, that something will at some point divert us into their way in which, as if on the side of a river, we will lean over to drink pure water and refresh the fatigue of the repetitions of the days. More often than not, our deviation into their direction is given without words, as in a prayer. With a touch, with a look, with a gesture without words, we find, joyfully, that they are close to us. We love them for their presence, for being with us in our day-to-day lives. They do not work just as ornaments, they embrace us as a kind of contagious life that has the power to expand our own. It is like they had been made for special moments, as if their function was to make our own time in life special, not allowing themselves to be banalized. Unerasable, even if sometimes inhabitants of the night of our hurried gaze, they are there and are placed as devices of our memory, of our imagination, of our daydreams and of our sensitivity.

To talk about Gonzaga's work, thus, becomes of importance, because, like in those moments of thoughtful and sensitive lingering that steal minutes from my hurried days, in those moments I find the opportunity to also express in words what in me is mobilized by the works of this dear colleague, Professor and Artist.

### II - A STRANGE BEAUTY



**Figure 1.** GONZAGA, Luiz. *The artist's creative process*. 09.23.2014. Porto Alegre. Picture by Maciel Goelzer. Available at:<http://www.ufrgs.br/ufrgs/noticias/etapas-e-elementos-das-criacoes-do-artista-plastico-luiz-gonzaga> Access in: Sept. 2017.

1. Paper presented on August 21<sup>st</sup>, 2014, in Sala Fahrion/UFRGS, in a round table on the PERCURSO DO ARTISTA - LUIS GONZAGA, curated by Prof. Dr. Blanca Brites/IA-UFRGS.

The biography of a man<sup>2</sup> can hardly be fully disclosed. Not because of his secrets, not even because of the full account of his actions. Being always partial, it can only infer from a life what it produces as its work which, here, does not mean to quantitatively point out what was produced, but to recognize as a work only that which carries what can be called duration. In other words, what emerges from its silence becomes the work of an author and, as an unrelenting language, produces in the world of recipients more and more effects, reverberating versions, opening new possibilities of interpretation that carve their voids that still resist and insist on expressions already made. A work, in this case, also erases the name of the author, as it offers itself to the world as a distance to be reached and made impossible to reach in every attempt. Incessant, always retreating, the work acts against time, against space, since while it offers itself to appreciations, it also refuses to total surrender. It resists the present space-time to condense in itself something of a complex currentness that becomes like a spurt of a split time between past and future. It belongs to the crystal of time, it acts against the grain of a personal and actual history, and contains in itself multiplicities formed by the events of a life that is much wider than the existence of mortal men. To tell a life, with this indefinite article, means to aim to the reserves of the infinite in the finite, to the unlimited in the limited, means the confidence that the work comes and is destined to the breadth and expansion of its senses far beyond the possible ones we came to attribute to it. In this sense, the path of the artist reveals his saga towards this infinite, it reveals itself as his creative and narrative drive, it stands out as an expression of the failure of his achievements, since, even if he is satisfied with his last performance or even with the work already produced, the artist is compelled to tell once more, to do otherwise, to seek in his anxieties, answers

that he knows will always be incomplete to the silences that populate himself and the world. Thus, to tell an artist's life would be to affirm this love to the strange by him nurtured and which ceases to be by becoming his own fuel. As a great translator of affections, the body of the artist becomes a tool to operate creations of new worlds of images. As a body of passage of anonymous and inhuman forces, the artist donates himself to his work, it looms as an event that becomes, itself, the river where the artist is immersed. An inversion, then, happens. It is no longer man and the river, now, it is the river in the man.

Gonzaga is an artist of this sort. As a producer of something "Off" of man, he is not satisfied in configuring it only as a finished form. He seeks, through his sensitive and intuitive exploration, the greatest game of the real, seeking not only what appears to us as evidence. Gonzaga scrutinizes the paths of the man's inside out, throwing it beyond the all too human. As a perfect articulator between human and inhuman, this artist launches us to transcendental realities. Sticking on us the nature before being made human, he forges a narrative of the pre-story of man, aiming, with his thinking hands, at the complexity of our constitution that, once becomes human, forgets its animal, vegetables and minerals multiplicities. The inhumanity in man is what points us to the work of Gonzaga, who, as a narrator of ancient times, fuses them to compose the immemorial times of our species. The nonman in man, as Blanchot would say<sup>3</sup>, as we read in Kafka<sup>4</sup>. These areas of silence and, yet, activity in our primordial unconscious, become pulsating for the work of Gonzaga. In that sense, one could not fail to remember that swim in the river, which he, as a boy, refers. The muddy sludge beneath his feet gave him an invaluable experience, that of his connection with the creative chaos. Since then, he has become the man-river, having the river and its mud taking command of his forces, wanting, in its quiteness, to become an expression. Gonzaga responded to this call. He listened to it, and more. He dedicated his life to it. The wait and the promise, perhaps, were the important words that gave him drive. He felt his feet on muddy ground and he felt his body wrapped in the water, he felt that from there could arise a demiurge, a creator of worlds, that we do not rush into calling surreal, but fantastic. The figures, coming out of his flooded, enlarged and still muddy imagination, show us that the

2. Luiz Gonzaga Mello Gomes - Júlio de Castilhos, RS – 1940. Sculptor. He graduated from the School of Fine Arts of the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul in 1966, perfecting himself in sculpture two years later. During this period he attended the atelier of Christina Balbão. In 1973, he studied tapestry with Yeddo Tietze at the Centre of Arts at the Federal University of Santa Maria. He was part of a scholarship program between 1978 and 1979, at the School of Fine Arts of San Fernando, Universidad Complutense de Madrid, Spain, where he specialized in mural painting. From that moment on, he worked as a teacher at the Centre of Arts at UFSM and in 1985 he moved to the Institute of Arts at UFRGS. He participates in the 9<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> International Biennial of São Paulo, in 1967 and 1991; in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> Panorama of Brazilian Art, at MAM, São Paulo, in 1985 and 1991, and in the Arte Sul 89, at MARGS, Porto Alegre, 1989. He is the author of the Sabedoria (Wisdom) monument at the rectory of UFSM, 1977; of the monument to the Memorial dos Mortos Desaparecidos Políticos (Monument to the Dead and Missing Politicians), in the Marinha do Brasil Park, Porto Alegre, 1995, and of the panel in embossing in the Ana Rosa station of the São Paulo subway.

3. BLANCHOT, Maurice. *O livro por vir*. São Paulo: Martins Fontes, 2005.

\_\_\_\_\_, *O espaço literário*. Rio de Janeiro: Rocco, 2011

4. KAFKA, Franz. *A metamorfose*. São Paulo: Hedra, 2009.

swim in the river he took has pointed him to an entire existence: he then looked at the world around him, especially at nature, at the phases of day, at the sap of the earth, at the seeds and their germination, at the curves of nature, of bodies and of shelter, at the night clenched by horns, at the great nocturnal, at the dew, at the sounds of the forest. He felt the sting of his destiny, of merging with these matters, of problematizing them critically in his figurations, of becoming, at last, a kind of messenger of a forgotten but incarnate time, he began his quest for a lost time. Like Proust<sup>5</sup>, but in his own way, Gonzaga became a seeker of what the processes of humanization caused man to forget about himself. He invented images imbued with this message, images of a man-made absence against its muddy origins. His language, always critical, nevertheless, was also always tender. There are no strident cries in its forms, only a strange germination springs from them, a human outline allows the idea of an animal and vegetable content and also, its fantastic small table in which is housed a small anvil and of which it is said that one can hear sounds of the naked and cruel nature where life is engendered.



**Figure 2.** GONZAGA, Luiz. *Os sons da floresta, em certos momentos II*. 1999. 1 Polychrome bronze sculpture, 94 x 72 x 39 cm. Photography by: Pierre Yves Refalo. Available at: [http://www.gonzagaartistaplastico.com.br/site.asp?link=obras/1986\\_01.html](http://www.gonzagaartistaplastico.com.br/site.asp?link=obras/1986_01.html)\_Acesso em set.2017 Access in Sept.2017.

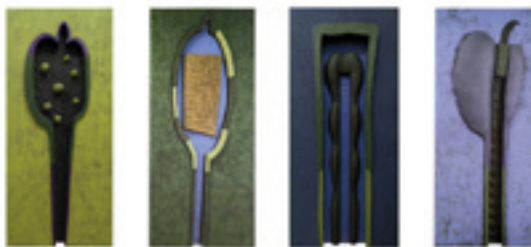
His figures have verse and obverse. And they both differ, as if they show us the right and the reverse of our vision, as if they attest to the fact that we are double, even when we want to be cohesive and identity. In Gonzaga, we find images that refer us to the politician of our existence, to the right to come and go, which translate themselves into great and subtle iron arches

placed in the void of space. His allusion to seminal and germinal rites, to the development of life, does not prevent him from seeing men themselves trapped in great arches of passage.



**Figure 3.** GONZAGA, Luiz. *Rito de passagem: o direito de ir e vir*. 2001. 1 Polychrome bronze sculpture, 32 x 53.5 x 23.5 cm. Photography by: Pierre Yves Refalo. Available at: [http://www.gonzagaartistaplastico.com.br/site.asp?link=obras/1986\\_01.html](http://www.gonzagaartistaplastico.com.br/site.asp?link=obras/1986_01.html)\_Acesso em set.2017 Access in Sept.

In fact, his evocations to the natural world always have their appearance in humanized outlines, indissociated from the human vision, from the humanized world, to which he shoots transversely his arrows. The coming and going of man refers to the basic postulate of his work: to coming and go in time, to be and not to be in space, freedom from the chains already signified, man, finally, drawn as one to come, as a passage, as becoming.



**Figure 4.** GONZAGA, Luiz. *Série fases do dia*. 2002. Sculptures in resin and iron, 245 x 159 x 20 cm each. Photography by: Pierre Yves Refalo. Available at: [http://www.gonzagaartistaplastico.com.br/site.asp?link=obras/1986\\_01.html](http://www.gonzagaartistaplastico.com.br/site.asp?link=obras/1986_01.html)\_Acesso em set.2017 Access in Sept.2017.

To read the signs of the world in a transcendental way would, still, be what we have to say about Gonzaga's work. We say transcendental, because it is not a transcendental-ideal quest to the world in which we are sunk. Rather, it is a search and a struggle for immanence, in order to bring back to the rivers of human existence the forgetting of that which founds it and which also deepens it in an anonymous, impersonal and a-signifying universe. In the

5. PROUST, Marcel. *Em busca do tempo perdido. O tempo redescoberto*. São Paulo: Globo, 1998.

world of Gonzaga's images, we see the world before language, before discursive meanings, we have the world of the signs of art that go beyond meanings, subjective and moral judgments.

In this world of such images, we share our existence as a pack of wolves. It is no longer an individual statement of a certain subject. Now, the I retreats in favor of the fifteen thousand tribes that inhabit us, in favor of the anonymous powers that have become our legacy. We are, with Gonzaga, animals, vegetables and minerals, we are germination of days, nights, twilight and auroras, we are the table where life is generated, we are the passage between the coming and going of what we are and what we are in becoming, we are, in the end, also man-river, man-seed, man neither male nor female. We are powers of becoming, reconciled with our forces, appeased in our conquests, but, always and forever, we are still and will be beings of the waiting and the promise. An aurora awaits for men, for each of them and for each of their times, one aurora. We must also delve into the river of childhood.

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**Tania Galli Fonseca:** Professor at the Institute of Psychology at UFRGS, professor and researcher at the Graduate Program in Social and Institutional Psychology/UFRGS, CNPQ researcher and author of several books and collections. She coordinates the research group *Corpo, Arte e Clínica* ([www.ufrgs.br/corpoarteclinica](http://www.ufrgs.br/corpoarteclinica)), and the *Cartografias* collection, edited by UFRGS and Sulina.

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