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How to activate a place² *Como acionar um lugar*

Abstract

Through critical analysis of the work of Quintino (2002), by Jailton Moreira (São Leopoldo, 1960), this article studies aspects of the relationship between art and memory. It discusses, initially, the efficacy of the artistic creation in bereavement works (art as coping mechanism of a loss), and, afterwards, it observes how the piece of art aims to juxtapose the notions of time and space, place and memory. In essence, it debates the game played between the dear oblivion inherent to urban life – what the city dynamics eliminates, buries, and denies – and what family remembrance refuses to set aside.

Keywords

Contemporary art. Quintino. Jailton Moreira. Place. Memory.

Resumo

A partir do exame crítico de Quintino (2002), de Jailton Moreira (São Leopoldo, 1960), o presente trabalho investiga aspectos das relações entre arte e memória. Discute inicialmente a eficácia da criação artística no trabalho de luto (a arte como elaboração de uma perda) e, na sequência, observa como a referida peça logra justapor as noções de espaço e tempo, lugar e memória. No cerne, debate-se o jogo armado entre os esquecimentos caros à vida urbana – o que a dinâmica da cidade elimina, soterra e renega – e o que a rememoração familiar se recusa a deixar de lado.

Palavras-chave

Arte contemporânea. Quintino. Jailton Moreira. Lugar. Memória.

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1- From the original interview in Portuguese: "O que me interessa é tomar os objetos [artísticos] e tentar ver o que posso fazer com eles; não tentar reduzi-los ou encontrar-lhes o suposto sentido, mas ver se esse exercício nos pode ajudar a pensar noutros problemas." DAMISCH, Hubert (2007, p. 9).

"What interests me is taking [artistic] objects and trying to see what I can do with them; not trying to reduce them or finding in them their opposite meaning, but seeing whether this exercise can help us think of other problems."

DAMISCH, Hubert (2007, p. 9)¹

There are no more than half a dozen questions that truly obsess an art lover. Life is usually brief, and the repertoire of images capable of moving us is also finite. Even among great erudite – I think of Aby Warburg, for example –, there are limitations. The themes soon become repetitive: the nymph, the serpent, and the astrological signs. A single artistic object can monopolize our attention for a long time and unavoidably. Arthur Danto dedicates significant amount of his thoughts, throughout the decades, to a single experience. He insists at this to a point that, when mentioning once more the amazement due to the Brillo boxes (1964) by Andy Warhol, he starts to refer to them as "my favorite example" (DANTO, 2006, p. 16). I begin with this remark, trying to justify my own return to a work that I analyzed, with exhaustive ambition, almost 15 years ago.

I have examined Quintino (2002), for the first time, due to the way Jailton Moreira's work (São Leopoldo, 1960) employed word and image. My considerations favored, on one hand, the special configuration of the piece, which juxtaposed over the same surface – a kind of street board - an urban situation plan (street blueprint), and certain amount of text. On the other hand, the discourse versed on the work in terms of public inscription, which I had imagined, at the time, very dependent on a parallel narrative, formulated by the artist himself. This condition stimulated me to want to hear him even more, and, deep down, it would take me to discuss the pertinence, the power, and systematization of statements gathered through interviews.²

Since I was invited today to a critical exercise regarding the relationship among art, memory and erasure, I remember (someone has already noticed that this verb is sacred and we should not be allowed to pronounce it unpunished) Quintino. I return to the work with slight different pretensions from the previous approach, even though not strange to them. Now, it interests me, above all, to debate how recollections of a domestic nature articulate, and collective sharing, as well as the games at play among the oblivion so characteristic in urban life – what the city dynamics eliminates, buries and denies – and what the family grief insists on preserving. A question here, other there, will be intertwined by yet other questions that regard the relationship between creation and memory: how to assign a poetic form to the ghosts that chase us? How to make present something from the past without having to resort to (so many times failed) ploy of representation? How to activate a place?

In order to achieve that, I will resort to authors who discuss issues related to memory (Halbwachs, Huyssen, Pollak) and space (Harley, Massey, Seemann), and I will resume the interview with the artist done at my first approach to Quintino.

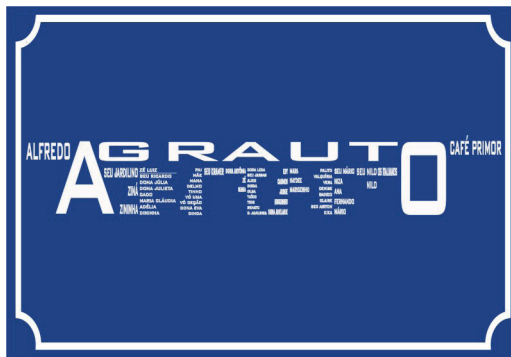
2- The analysis of Quintino is among the three case studies that compose my Masters dissertation, presented at the post-Graduation Program in Visual Arts at UFRGS, with emphasis in Art History, Theory and Criticism. The research advisor was Professor Dr. Elida Tessler, and it investigates the use of interviews with artists in academic studies regarding the artistic creation process (VERAS, 2006).

The analysis should be a bit distinct. On that occasion, the intention was to dissect the interview and what it could be taken from it, now the goal is to employ it, in fact, as an instrument for reflection.³ I maintain the conviction that artists are not only privileged witnesses of creative processes, but they also offer, in their testimonies, very sharp formulations – whether theoretical, philosophical, even about art and the paths of invention.

Help us think of other problems

I remember once again (once more with the sacred verb) my first encounter with Quintino. The piece was placed in something that was smaller than an ante-room, and a little more than a landing, on the top of the staircase, before coming into the exhibit itself.⁴ It resembled one of those old blue street signs, enameled, slightly bulging, which were fixed on street corner houses to identify naming the streets. Similar to those, it was high up, on a corner of the inside walls, also blue and bulging, with the same white fillet throughout the rectangle border (fig. 1).

The initial strangeness arose from its exaggerated size: almost a meter wide, more than double of a traditional sign. Even more curious, however, was the fact that it exhibited not a person's name, but dozens of names distributed in 12 parallel columns and followed by other words in even bigger lettering: "Café Primor", on one side; "Alfredo", on another; and the strangest of it all, "Agrauto" huge, on the middle, with the first and last letters a tad stretched, as if hugging the fillets. It made me feel that the sign dimension was amplified exactly to fit that whole plethora of names (fig. 2).



Next to me at the gallery, the author's piece, Jailton Moreira, gloating:

– You haven't got it, right?

Seeing my evident embarrassment, he exulted:

– My mom got it. She knows nothing about art, and she got it.

He proceeded to tell me that it was a graphical recreation of a street blue-print,⁵ of the neighborhood where he had lived during his whole childhood and



Figure 1: Vista da entrada da exposição *Trabalhos insistentes*, de Jailton Moreira

3- The interview with the artist was done on January 13th, 2005, at the home of the artist, in Porto Alegre, in the aforementioned context of research for my Masters degree. The transcription of the conversation is available in the annexes of that dissertation (VERAS, 2006, p. 182-189). For this current article, I have submitted the material to theoretical assumptions from Oral History, and to the analysis of the contents, methodology vastly disseminated among Social Sciences. Beyond the dissertation, I reviewed such possibilities of the use of interviews with artists in a more recent article (VERAS, 2017).

4- The exhibition, entitled *Trabalhos insistentes – Insistent Works*, began in October, 2002, at *Obra Aberta* Gallery, in Porto Alegre. The individual exhibit of Jailton Moreira presented, besides Quintino, a showcase of Cd covers, only of imaginary albums (albums that seemed possible, but, indeed, did not exist), three videos, and two video installations.

Figure 2: JAILTON Marenco MOREIRA, *Quintino*, 2002. Plotagem e tinta automotiva sobre placa acrílica, 66 x 107 cm. Coleção do artista

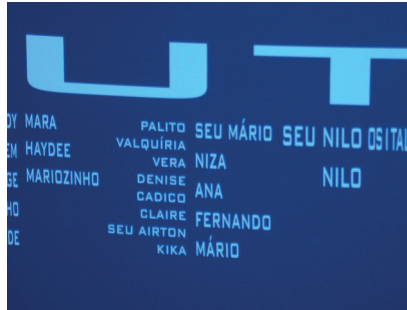


Figure 3: Quintino (detalhe)

5- In Portuguese it is called, in architecture realm, "planta de situação urbana" – urban situation plan – which is something in between a blueprint of a building and a city map.

It follows the same logic of representation: from a bird's eye view, and panoramic. It does not detail the rooms of a house, as in a blueprint, and neither the contour of the neighborhoods, as a map. Usually, it is restricted to a block that intends to represent, besides the locations, the format of each terrain. In this article, I have decided to use the term street blueprint in order to convey the idea of the artist.

part of his teen years: the stretch of Quintino Bocaiúva Street between Cristóvão Colombo and Marquês do Pombal Streets, in Porto Alegre. Each column of names corresponded to a house, listing each of its dwellers. In one of the columns: Mr. Ricardo, Mrs. Júlia, Mrs. Julieta, Cado. In other: Palito, Valquíria, Vera, Denise (fig. 3). In another column, Jailton's own home: Dad, Mom, Sis, Delmo, Tinho, Grandma Uma, Grandma Ceçãõ, Mrs. Eva, and Godmother. And so forth, house by house. Café Primor was a small coffee factory that was located on the corner of Cristóvão Street. Alfredo lived in a bigger house, on the other corner of Marquês do Pombal Street. Agrauto was the name of a tractor factory that, according to the blueprint, neighbored and surrounded, on the backside, a series of 12 townhouses.

Jailton added:

– I wished to do a work for a single person, something that was extremely important for a single person, and this person alone could understand.

At that time, this first encounter with Quintino and the provocation from my friend brought about a flood of questions: after all, a work of art can be directed to a single person? How the understanding of this lonely spectator is processed? How the work is able to activate the spectator's memory? If I am told what the other understood, can I also understand it? Why does the artist decide to share publicly such an intimate memory? In which different manners will people relate to that?

Nowadays, it seems to me that it is even more obvious that every object of art contains mysteries that will never be universally unfolded. There are ways of approximation that directly on something, in the work, that is related to information, life experiences, affections, and, ultimately, memories, which belong to a single society, or a small group, a family, perhaps two or three people, possibly, only one.

In a famous passage, Panofsky observes that, regarding a pictorial representation of the Holy Supper, an Australian aborigine would recognize, at most, the idea of a lively dinner. The iconology master ponders that facing some works of art that bring themes, which we do not have the desirable familiarity, "[...] we are all Australian aborigines". After that, he suggests that the critic's and the art historian's task would be ceasing being such aborigines (1991, 58-59).

Though witty and instructive, Panofsky's observations cause me some discomfort. It is not only the chosen example, in which the Australian aborigine is taken as ignorant (why not the German intellectual coming across dumbfounded before aborigine art?).

The fact is that dealing with something that is hard for us to understand, the path for deciphering the senses does not have to be, necessarily, the most indicated. Perhaps, it would suit us to take artistic objects, verify its operating modes, and seize this exercise so that it would help us to think of other problems, as suggested by Damisch in the comment that functions as an epigraph in this article. In the case, space and memory, memory and oblivion, oblivion and history.

We should start with the notion that forgetting could be, before a failure, a fortune.

The need not to remember

We have being going through a moment of unbridled celebration of memory; or yet, a moment of resented condemnation of forgetfulness. Contemporaneity claims for the preservation of lived episodes. Monuments, museums, exhibits, documentaries, books, academic researches, programs, official commissions and organizations, the most diverse institutions work hard for not leaving anything behind – not for later. The fortune of the forgotten, as well as procrastination, takes over a status of a mistake, a sin, almost a curse. The erasures, whether deliberate or not, go through an extreme reverse of remembrance. They are perceived as undesirable, treacherous, insidious. Hence, the importance of Huyssen's warning about the eventual advantages of obliterating the past, or at least trying to modulate the emphasis that we so fiercely dedicate to it: "[...] the intense focus on memories of the past can obstruct our imagination of the future and create a new blindness at the present" (2014, pg. 174).

Fictional literature, due to its imaginative and fantastical possibilities, advises us in a perhaps most fascinating and admirable way to the risks of a continuous obligation to relive what has been already experimented. In the short story *Funes*, the memorious, published for the first time in 1944, Jorge Luis Borges narrates the misfortunes of a fellow who, after falling off his horse, sees himself condemned to never forget a thing. His capability of remembering becomes so absolute that Ireneo Funes is able to reconstruct a full day's worth of past memories, every single detail, every single nuance, throughout a whole new day: "[...] not only did he remember each leaf of the tree of every hill, but also each time he had noticed or imagined it" (BORGES, 2007, pg. 106-107). The prodigious capability turns out to be a disgrace. The excess of memory hinders the young man's ability to think. The narrator claims that this prevents abstract thought, "to think is to forget a difference, to generalize, to abstract. In the overly replete world of Funes, there was nothing but details" (pg. 108).

Phillip Roth imagines an even more terrifying scenario. In the novel, *Indignation*, the protagonist, a bit older than a teenager, dies before reaching the first quarter of the book, and he finds out that, to his own amazement, the burden of eternity consists of remembering – without rest – each moment of his brief existence "to its tinniest features" (2009, pg. 47). The afterlife sums up to mentally reenact, to oneself, hour after hour, in a world without clocks, everything one has gone through in life.



The only direction is backwards. “You are chained to your life not only while you live it, but it continues chained to you after you die”, Markie laments (pg. 48). Stunned, he questions himself: “how much more of my past can I take it?” (pg. 49). The mnemonic experience, continually present, sends us to an unbearable dimension.

Remembering is not necessarily a blessing. The obsessive persistence of certain memories have the tendency of acquiring a paralyzing dimension, especially when they are related to loss – of people, objects, or places. In a classic psychoanalytic literature that compares mourning and melancholia, Freud describes a state of discouragement that follows great deprivation and that can comprehend even loss of libido. In the absence of what was lost, drive falters, and with it, all sort of action. Hence, the need of the so called work of mourning: a slow task in which the subject not only renounces what is missing to him now, but also transforms himself, replaying the game in which he got lost. After some time, the proof of reality usually triumphs. The ego, free and uninhibited again, seeks new investments (FREUD, 1992, pg. 132). The remembrance, at last, turns into a new mode of existence: longing.

At times, the work of mourning operates through artistic creation. The process is synthesized in a remarkable way in a recent movie: *Pain and Glory* (*Dolor y gloria*, Spain, 2019), directed and written by Pedro Almodóvar. At certain point of the plot, the character of Alberto, an actor on the edge of ostracism, tries to convince his friend, Salvador, writer, screenwriter and moviemaker, to give him a text, still unreleased, so He can act it out in the stage. The manuscript, inspired on real life events of Salvador, reviews the mishaps of a Love relationship, including its denouement. The author resists giving it up. Alberto insists: “So, why did you write it?” The other replies: “to get rid of it”. The dialogue suggests that transposing a sad memory to a poetic form is equal to free yourself from it. The exercise of narrating works as a decisive part of the grief effort: to remember one last time, in order to, at last, withdraw the painful memory.

I suppose that a suspension like this one – a kind of mourning work – is what takes place in the case of Quintino. In his narrative about the conceiving process of the sign, Jailton Moreira resumes the experience, if not traumatic, at least disenchanting, of abandonment of his childhood home: “there was a moment that my family had to leave this place, because it was going to be demolished; all the houses, mine and the neighbors’ would be destroyed in order to make room for a big construction” (2006, pg. 182)⁶. The set of townhouses, as well as the factory that surrounded them, the huge house on the corner, the café on the other corner surrendered the block for the construction of a wet market that would become well known in the city – and it would also be, later on, knocked down, replaced in a more present time by a series of buildings, including two huge towers of apartments, over 15 floors each. The artist remembers the embarrassment of that move: family and neighbors not only abandoned their homes, in mass, in a synchronic movement, but also had to carry within their awareness of annihilation of the space where they had built their daily lives.

6- From the original interview: “Houve um momento em que a minha família teve de sair desse local porque ele ia ser destruído; todas as casas, as minhas e as dos vizinhos, seriam destruídas para dar lugar a uma grande construção” (2006, p. 182).

In Jailton's case, then, a 15 year-old boy, the farewell outlined with yet other contours: "it wasn't just the loss of the home, it was also a rite of passage from teenagehood to adulthood: changing homes, schools, life. To elaborate this was very complicated [...] I left there a piece of my life" (2006, pg. 182). Here, according to Freud's definition, it might have been a detour regarding the "normal conduct of life" (1992, pg. 131). It is not the profound and immobilizing discouragement, characteristic to melancholic states, but something there weighed in – or brought about grief. The image of the street block very often, throughout the years, would return to the artist's imagination, as a remembrance chained to his memory.

"There was a need", says Jailton. "By the way, it wasn't even a need...it was a recurrence of things. I saw myself trying to represent that, without the task of actually having to represent it." There was no specific demand, of the kind to relive your childhood or tell us an experience. He was not inclined to try and elaborate anything from that. It was persistence, but a bit vague, like Phillip Roth's character in the novel *Indignation*, without being able to interrupt or control the mental reenactment of the past. In Jailton's narrative, he was not the one who chased the memory; it was the opposite, it assaulted him. "When I realized", the interviewed continued, "I was drawing the facade of the house, drawing the blueprint of it, of the street [...]. It [the memory] ran me over before it would take place" (VERAS, 2006, pg. 183)⁷.

At this point of remembrance, the artist mentions something that seems decisive to what he would reach with Quintino: "I always came to face the impossibility of representing that street block. It was always less than I knew it to be. It has always felt short from the lived experience" (pg. 183)⁸. The discontentment with the visual representation modes would open a path for the blue sign to obtain the appearance it came to have – and, at last, it would free the artist from the insistent return to the loss of childhood.

The soul cannot take ink

Questions regarding representation have always followed the history of images; if we wish, since the rock inscriptions (rock art) in the prehistoric caves. The narratives of represented experienced glories are usually associated to the illusionist capacity of these symbolic productions, the gift of mimetizing the reality in a more trustworthy way. A delicious counterpoint is synthesized (once more) by Jorge Luis Borges. In a very short tale, of only a paragraph, the Argentinean master reports the existence of an ancient civilization in which the art of cartography reached such perfection that the map of a single province occupied the whole town, and the map of the empire, a whole province. In time, cartographers developed their craft even more and made a map of the empire with the exact size of the empire, coinciding with it point by point. It happened that the huge map revealed to be useless and it was abandoned to the inclement of the Sun and the winters. The narrator points out that: "not without some Pitilessness was it, that they delivered it up to the Inclemencies of Sun and Winters. In the deserts of the West, still today, there are tattered

7- From the original: "Quando eu via", prossegue o entrevistado, "estava fazendo um desenho da fachada, estava fazendo uma planta-baixa da casa, uma planta de situação da rua. [...] Ela [a lembrança] me atropelava antes de acontecer." (VERAS, 2006, p. 183)

8- From the original: "Sempre me deparava com a impossibilidade de representar aquela quadra. Sempre ficava menos do que eu sabia. Sempre ficava muito aquém do que tinha sido a experiência" (p. 183, grifos meus).



9- From the original interview:
 "Eu fazia, não dava certo, eu
 botava fora", conta Jailton
 (VERAS, 2006, p. 183).

10- From the Portuguese:
 "Construtor e pintor entenderam
 bem as indicações que lhes fiz:
 é o mesmo prédio assobradado,
 três janelas de frente, varanda
 ao fundo, as mesmas alcovas
 e salas [...] Enfim, agora, como
 outrora, há aqui o mesmo
 contraste da vida interior, que
 é pacata, com a exterior, que é
 ruidosa" (MACHADO DE ASSIS,
 s/d, p. 21-22).

11- From the Portuguese: "[...] não
 não consegui recompor o que
 foi e nem o que fui. Em tudo, se
 o rosto é igual, a fisionomia é
 diferente. Se só me faltassem os
 outros, vá; mas falto eu mesmo,
 e esta lacuna é tudo. O que
 aqui está é, mal comparando,
 semelhante à pintura que se
 põe na barba e nos cabelos, e
 que apenas conserva o hábito
 externo, como se diz nas
 autópsias; o interno não aguenta
 tinta" (MACHADO DE ASSIS, s/d,
 p. 22).

ruins of that Map, inhabited by animals and beggars; in all the land there is no other relic of the Disciplines of Geography" (BORGES, 1989, pg. 71).

The failure of representation, in this case, does not refer exactly to how the instruments created by men make up or not the desired mimesis. The hindrance comes from the excess of the environment's presence, its excesses of similarities. A failure of this nature comes up during Jailton Moreira's account. It was not a lack of skills that he could not draw the different representations that were always less, always falling short from the imagined. The drawings could not evoke the experience of the place. At the most, they reminded them, but did not make it present. They were all discarded – useless, like the Borgian map, abandoned in the desert. "I did it, it didn't work out, I threw it out", told me Jailton (VERAS, 2006, pg. 183)⁹.

Perhaps, the most precise analogy and even more savory, summoned when I first commented on Quintino, I found on the initial pages in the novel *Dom Casmurro* (1900), when the narrator explains, trying to justify himself, why he decided to write the book the reader holds on his hands. Vexed, Bento Santiago confesses that his first gesture was to recreate, in his old age, the house of his youth, from the time of his first love. He wanted to give the new residence, in Engenho Novo, "the same aspect and economy of the other", on Mata-Cavalos Street, that had already been demolished, and that moment persisted only as a recollection: "builder and painter understood well the directions that I had given them: it is the same townhouse, three front windows, a porch in the back, the same rooms and quarters". In everything, the new house reproduces the old one, even the decorative busts replicated the ones from the past: Caesar, Augustus, Nero e Masinissa. The painting on the walls and ceiling depicted big birds snapping with their beaks identical small flowers wreaths: "at last, now, as in olden days, there is here the same contrast to the interior life, which is peaceful and quiet, and the exterior life, which is noisy" (MACHADO DE ASSIS, s/d, pg. 21-22)¹⁰.

In this effort of duplicating, the narrator's confessed objective is to settle accounts with the past, with the unburied memories that torment him: "my evident goal was to tie the two ends of life, and restore teenage years during old age". The project, however, soon fails. As successful it seemed to be in appearance, the rebuild home did not place the past motion. Casmurro notices:

[...] I couldn't recompose what it was neither what I have been. In all, if the face is the same, the physiognomy is different. If only the others were absent, that would be ok, but I am absent myself, and this gap is everything. What is here is, poorly compared, similar to the ink one dyes his beard and hair, and he only preserves the external habit, as it is said in autopsies; the soul can't take ink (MACHADO DE ASSIS, s/d, pg. 22)¹¹.

When Jailton mentions his dissatisfaction before the drawings of his old townhouse, He refers to something very similar to what is reported by Machado's character: as successful it was duplicating the house, the soul cannot take ink. The artist states: "[...] the representation image is always less, it is always a failure, it is always something that is not it" (VERAS, 2006, pg. 187)¹². Duplication/representation works as replacing: it inserts something in the place, but it does not fill the gaps.

After successive failed attempts to reunite with the past, the recurrence of images from that time still persists in the memory. The facade sketches, the blue-prints, the street prints keep coming.

In Bentinho's case (from the novel *Dom Casmurro*), the writing of the book will, finally, allow him to tie both ends of his life and fill in its gaps. The narrator claims that finally the busts on the walls whispered to him: since they were not going to restore the days of yore, he should, himself, grab ink and paper and try to embrace the project of a personal narrative:

I was so glad with this idea that the quill still quivers in my hand. Yes, Nero, Augustus, Masinissa, and you, great Caesar who incite me to make my remarks, I thank you for the advice, and I will lay on paper all my reminiscences that come to mind. This way, I will live what I have lived, and will put my hand to create a bigger tome (MACHADO DE ASSIS, s/d, pg. 22, my translation)¹³.

He barely started writing the book, and the author already realizes that the effort will allow him to not only live what has been already lived, but also open up a path for other and renewed works; luckily, even more powerful. In the case of Jailton, this is feasible through the original street sign. Quintino does not duplicate, it does not represent nor replace the lost home. In the words of the artist, it activates the place. This idea, as well as its modes of elaboration and functioning, will be discussed a little further on this article. For now, I would like to emphasize the praise to some forgetfulness.

In a case or other, whether in Bentinho's book, whether in Jailton's plaque, the instauration of something – with compelling evocative power – enables a rearrangement with the past: as if it were imperative to remember one last time and fixate in some manner the old memories, so beloved and recurrent, to, at last, from them, to feel free and stimulated to move on. I summon up again the different authors briefly mentioned so far in this paper: Borges who warns us that in order to think, one should forget, generalize and rescind. Almodóvar who trusts in the power of emancipation from forgetfulness: tell stories not for the love of

12- From the Portuguese: "[...] a imagem de representação é sempre menor, é sempre um fracasso, é sempre uma coisa que não é aquilo" (VERAS, 2006, p. 187).

13- From the original: "Fiquei tão alegre com esta ideia, que ainda agora me treme a pena na mão. Sim, Nero, Augusto, Massinissa e tu, grande César, que me incitas a fazer os meus comentários, agradeço-vos o conselho, e vou deitar ao papel as reminiscências que me vierem vindo. Deste modo, viverei o que vivi, e assentarei a mão para uma obra de maior tomo" (MACHADO DE ASSIS, s/d, p. 22).



14- From the Portuguese:
 "Esquecer não apenas torna a vida vivível, como constitui a base dos milagres e epifanias próprias da memória" (2014, p. 138).

storytelling, but to unchain oneself to what curtails him. The slow reabsorption of reality, according to Freud, shows that the loved object - and lost one - there is no more; the remembrance of its existence resettles, little by little, as consolation. Huyssen emphasizes the impulses that make the erasure part that composes what is worth remembering: "forgetting not only makes life livable, but it is also the basis for miracles and epiphanies pertaining to memory" (2014, pg. 138, my translation)¹⁴. My presumption here is to remember that some forgetfulness is an inalienable part of the fixation and reinvention processes of the memory. The erasures, usually, takes place due to cultural, social, and political issues; often, they take place without any effort, it is enough that nothing is done; at times, they are more than welcome, they are necessary.

It is still worth to point out that, reviewing and critically analyzing Jailton Moreira's interview, those statements seem to me now a possible and final chapter of a mourning process that the artist has built. With detachment and serenity, the author approached the losses of youth with resourcefulness and no apparent sadness, filtered in some measure by the work itself and the story of its invention. Jailton's statements, while interacting to the interviewer, allowed, once more, the past to mold itself to the present time.

We should consider, finally, the different temporalities that maybe overlap in this text - and they should never be mistaken with one another. There is the moment of the old townhouses on Quintino Bocaiúva Street, in Porto Alegre, and the moment that there is no obligation to abandon them in name of progress; there is the time of elaboration and presentation of Jailton Moreira's art work, the time of the interview I have conducted with him, the time of my writing, and, at last, reclaiming all this material right here and now. Finally, one more question to ponder about. For now, we are not going to the Suburbs History (História dos subúrbios), as Bentinho intended. We shall observe how to activate a place.

About insistences, demands and life acquisitions

When I propose that the creation of a work of art corresponds to building a work of mourning, I am, perhaps, simplifying involuntarily and disgracefully what would be each of them. Obviously, in both processes, several and distinct elements act and muddle themselves - not all processes made to be easily uncovered, not all exact, some, I suppose, never to be discernible. The elaboration of one does not entail necessarily the resolution of the other. Paraphrasing Huyssen, in his comments about memory functioning, there would be epiphanies, and miracles characteristic of creative invention. Jailton Moreira's statement seems to alert us to the fact that, during the opening of a work of art or a set of them, different tendencies and motivations take place, some very rational, others, unconsciously. The artist reflects:

Usually, I have certain intellectual demands. When the works come up, it is not due to any inspiration. It is because I am thinking towards a certain way, and the work sort of wears that thought. What happens? There is an emotional, intellectual demand, where I take some things that arrive to me with no big explanation. I live with these things for a while, and... It is never like I have a need to create a work and try to illustrate it. No. I have a demand that generates a sort of perception of things. When I am imbued of them, I take some time to understand these things that come up to me. The time to transform this in work is when I least understand things. It takes some time until the work takes place (VERAS, 2006, pg. 189, my italics, my translation)¹⁵.

The creation process, as well as the mourning one, at least in this case we are examining here, took place little by little, which demanded certain perceptive slowness, a whole cycle of maturation, frequent images and consolidation of them. It means, with some success, to wear a thought instead of simply illustrating it. In Quintino, the effort to free from past recurrences coincide, at some point, with the questionings the artist made regarding the reasons for his art: "Quintino only starts to happen when [...] the discussions about space and place, about chunks of life, about specific knowledge, the idea of quality instead of quantity of audience become clear to me" (pg. 189, my italics, my translation)¹⁶. The demands, which have already been signaled in other propositions by the artist, would find excellent expression precisely on the blue plaque – and in other of his contemporary works that also composed the exhibit at Obra Aberta Gallery. The very name of the exhibit already signaled the existence of these requests and their modes of existence: *Insistent Works* (Trabalhos insistentes).

Searching for a remote origin for the formal configuration the blue sign would come to have, Jailton alludes to the work of the British artist Richard Long (Bristol, 1945), a name traditionally associated to land art, to environmental sculpture, and conceptual art. One of his exhibits in England would have offered a few hints to Quintino.

Before tackling that idea, we shall review, summarizing them, the articulation of different processes: there was a recurrence of images from the childhood home, and the dissatisfaction with the representative solutions that the memories brought about. The creative demands were, further on, outlined, which were related to the inquietudes that came to be due to the artist's memories journey – and by the continuous expansion of their incidence and repertoire of images; such recurrence we could call an insistence. Jailton states: "in art, some influences authorize us to think what we haven't thought of yet. After that it is difficult to know where these influences are: 'why didn't I think of that before?' Because I didn't have the

15- From the original in Portuguese: "Normalmente, tenho certas demandas intelectuais. Quando os trabalhos aparecem, eles não aparecem por uma inspiração qualquer. É porque estou pensando para um certo lado, e o trabalho veste um pouco aquele pensamento. O que acontece? Existe uma demanda emocional, intelectual, onde aceito algumas coisas que chegam sem grande explicação. Convivo com essas coisas durante algum tempo e... Não acontece de eu ter uma demanda e criar um trabalho procurando ilustrá-la. Não. Eu tenho uma demanda que gera uma espécie de percepção das coisas. Quando estou imbuído dela, algumas coisas começam a chegar, e eu levo tempo para entender essas coisas que chegam. A hora de transformar isso em trabalho é quando eu mais ou menos entendo. Leva um tempo até que o trabalho aconteça" (VERAS, 2006, p. 189, grifos meus).

16- From the original in Portuguese: "Quintino só começa a acontecer quando [...] ficam nítidas para mim as discussões sobre espaço e lugar, sobre fatias de vida, sobre conhecimentos específicos, a ideia de qualidade em vez de quantidade de público" (p. 189, grifos meus).



17- From the original in Portuguese: "Em arte, algumas influências nos autorizam a pensar o que a gente ainda não havia pensado. Depois fica difícil de saber onde estão essas influências: 'Por que eu não pensei nisso antes?'. Porque eu não tinha a formação, não tinha talvez a experiência do outro" (p. 183).

18- From the original in Portuguese: "Sem essas demandas, as coisas não me chegam muito. Ou elas chegam, e eu não vejo. Com as demandas, as coisas chegam, vão estacionando, estacionando, estacionando, até que aparece o trabalho" (VERAS, 2006, p. 189).

19- From the original in Portuguese: "Isso, dentro daquele contexto, ficou muito grande, ficou quente. Pela primeira vez, eu vi um negócio desses esquentar. Eu não sabia que arte conceitual podia ser quente. Inteligente, eu sabia que podia ser. Mas quente, eu não sabia" (p. 184, grifos meus).

knowledge or the experience of the other" (pg. 183, my translation)¹⁷. There was an almost 10-year gap, it is important to stress that – between Jailton's visit to Long's exhibit and the formal configuration that Quintino would take. This time, as verified earlier, was for the work of mourning period, and the maturing of the references or consolidation of new concerns. The poet Paul Valéry compiles this temporal distention that usually follows creative moments, always marked as repetitions, eliminations, and choices. In his anthological *The Course in Poetics: First Lesson (Primeira aula do curso de Poética)*, he remarks that, many times, the conception of a work of art demands months and years of pondering, but it can also encompass the experiences and acquisitions of a lifetime (1999, pg. 183). Similarly, Jailton observes that the demands – and, undoubtedly, they include experiences and acquisitions of a lifetime – authorize him to do the work: "without these demands, things don't come to me. Either they come or I don't see them. With the demands, things come, they start parking, parking, parking, until the work comes to be" (VERAS, 2006, pg. 189, my translation)¹⁸.

About heat and the driving force: maps, words and signs

In Richard Long's exhibit, besides photographic records of his walks through far and desert places, and besides the recreation of the installation of some of those outings, there were maps that directly reminded the experiences with the landscape. In one of them, for example, named *A line in Scotland* (in Portuguese: *Caminhada durante uma hora no norte da Escócia*), some words are disposed in a circle, replicating the same format of the walk, referring to things, events or animals which the British artist came in contact there: "rock", "wind", "bird". Jailton remarks: "this, within that context, got really big, very hot. For the first time, I saw this deal of heat. I didn't know conceptual art could be hot. I knew it could be intelligent. But hot, I didn't know it" (pg. 184, my italics, my translation)¹⁹.

To understand the proposed formulation in Quintino, we should first examine the specificities of Long's maps, in order to identify, by extension, the singularities of the blue street sign. This would enable us to better understand what Jailton considers as heat and activate, and luckily, will allow us to better access what I think in terms of memory erasure and methods of approach to these erasures in contemporary art.

First of all, the maps! In a very general way, we know that they are visualization tools and synthesis of different geographies. They describe and signalize spaces and distances, accidents, and particularities within. In a unique way, they endorse our presence in the world: through the cartography, being becomes where. Maps help us define the apprehension we have of ourselves and our environment. Obviously, they are not unbiased. They delimit areas, identify ownership, and signalize appropriations. Since the 1980s, the author of *The History of Cartography (A história da cartografia)* has been warning us about certain tendency of maps to create detours, variations, and abuses of reality. In more serious cases,

according to Brian Harley, there would be intentional distortions of outlines, as well as deliberate omission of information, which he calls “silences” (2009). Maps work, therefore, as ideological tools, even though they could also serve in actions of resistance and coping mechanisms.

Anyway, as geographer Doreen Massey recalls, maps are always representations: “and they are in the creative and sophisticated sense in which we learn how to signify that word”. The British author remarks that, through “organizational procedures and taxonomy”, maps offer a kind of double observed space. They intend to replace, but they do not necessarily achieve the goal. Massey resorts to Magritte’s famous painting: “a map of a geography is no more that geography – or that space – than a painting of a pipe is a pipe” (2015, pg. 160). Even in case of perfect duplications, as mentioned in Borges’s (the insane map in a scale 1/1, which configuration takes over the whole country), the representation is flawed. It is less, as Jailton says. We have to admit that, even with the best ones, maps can gather the kind of complexities that emanate from the relationship between space and culture. Jörn Seeman states that: “the ideal case [in cartographical elaboration] takes place when the geographer is able to connect product and process, politics and poetics, analogy and metaphor” (2010, pg. 12). I imagine that the flavor of Richard Long’s maps comes from that, or Jailton’s blueprint of the neighborhood: beyond the representations, and their unavoidable failures, beyond the intentional or deliberate omission, we have, in the work of these artists, product and process, politics and poetics, analogy and metaphor.

For now, what interests us, here, requires to highlight that cartography also works as a means of memory preservation, at least ideally. Maps report discovered territories, and they present the trodden paths. It is not by chance that children’s tales preserve secret trails that lead to fountains of youth, and buried treasures. On the same way, they assure the reverse path: they guide the returns, and guarantee that their user never gets lost. Cartography – according to Balestrin Nunes – registers present situations, and in an equal manner, stabilizes the past: “the map is memory’s mirror” (2016, pg. 105). Maps codes and conventions aim to fixate geography – more or less, like portrait art intends. They make visited spaces visible, realize imagined or planned places, and record the places that are no longer. Maps allow us to access especially remote places, but also distant places in time, which were erased.

This mnemonic trait appears in Long’s maps, as well as in Jailton’s blueprint. The first one records lived experiences: the walk through the desert, the march through the woods; the second evokes a space that the urban dynamics pretend never existed – or that, the most, tolerates with a historical longing.

Not by chance, maps have been fascinating visual artists since the beginning of cartography. We can recall the geographical charts from Medieval period, finely ornate; during Renaissance, artists like Leonardo would be called to manufacture maps; Frans Post was in charge of painting the landscape of Pernambuco with the Dutch entourage, and at the same time, he had to fix graphically the outline of the Brazilian coastline; great maps adorned home environments represented by Vermeer. The examples are innumerable as delicious.

In recent times, the seduction – or partnership – between art and cartography seems to have acquired other shades still. Gilles Tiberghien reviews this relationship in an article that he calls attention to the increasing interest from contemporary artists, and also to the enthusiasm of geographers regarding artists' contributions. The French researcher notices that artists, when appropriate maps and their syntaxes, tend to draw attention to problems that cartographers have not yet realized. Among the remarkable cases he mentions, there is the very same Richard Long. Tiberghien emphasizes the diversity of uses the British usually attributes to maps: sometimes, they bring the coordinates of the traveled paths, on other occasions, they inform the necessary time to cover certain distances, once in a while pointing out obstacles and pauses. The Sorbonne professor mentions one of Long's statements showing how maps can present the tracks of other passersby as well as the artist's own walks. Maps let us have a glimpse of, in the words of Long, "[...] thousands of other layers of human and geographic history" (2013, pg. 247).

I have to call attention to what Tiberghien proposes in order to build my thesis here, the referential role played by maps in the production of Long and also of other artists who came up in the 60s and 70s. On one hand, according to the author, there



were in those poetics an interest for the environment itself, the map coming out in its pictorial and semantics complexity; on the other hand, especially in the productions of land art and distinct conceptualisms, the desire to document ephemeral actions and placing performances in sites of difficult access. In both cases, maps' complex nature was evident, since they are not completely on the side of images, or on the concepts. Maps, in Tiberghien's view, would be "peculiar types of images that, at one single time,

are concrete representations and a representation of abstract thought" (2013, pg. 237).

At this point, it would be worth to pose the question: what, precisely, according to Jailton, makes Long's map hot?

I have already shown that geographical charts by the British artist registered his wanderings: it could be a circle, or perhaps, a very long straight line, a spiral, a maze. However, it is not only that. They signal temporary presences, non-static, unmappable, non important, presences that became memorable only for the person who had been there in a very specific occasion: a bird, a rock, the wind. These presences in many maps – like that one, in the North of Scotland, that impressed Jailton – were represented not by drawings or images, but by words. Hence, the heat recognized by the Brazilian artist.

Of course, all modern cartography includes the use of words: most maps have in full the name of countries, cities, oceans, deserts; the street blueprints show the names of streets and neighborhoods; home blueprints show the identification of each room in a house: kitchen, bathroom, living room. In Long's art, the words, often, replace a whole visual image – there is no dot, no line, no contour, there are no colors, nor graphic designs to define geographic accidents, like blue for water or hachures for the woods. We have only words disposed on paper (fig. 4). And words evoke not only what they name (bird, rock or wind), but also, as mentioned before, from their graphic disposition, they bring the journey and the traveled path to the present. In Tiberghien's inspired interpretation, Long's circle describes on paper "[...] and makes us see the geography under geometry, the landscape on the map" (2013, pg. 247).

The words do more than replacing images, more than taking over their functions, they merge into them. Transfigure them. In Long's maps, there is a kind of migratory movement: from verbal to visual.

It is relevant to mention the long path of association between Word and Image in the field of arts. Debates go back to the *ut pictura poesis* doctrine, in the beginning of the Common Era, and even before that. Eventually, this association took over the form of battles, as the paragone during Renaissance; the proclamation of autonomies between the two universes, as in *Laocoonte* by Lessing; or, still, they claim certain correspondence between making it seen and enunciating, such as in the case of the very existence of Criticism, Aesthetics, and Art History. The conviviality, according to the approach used, can be even more intimate. Michel Butor summarizes this admirably: "Our vision is never pure vision". A wall, erected by knowledge, separates word and image. The poet suggests, realizing this is to question the wall, and this might be enough to tear it down. "Interesting blindness", says Butor (1969, pg. 8).

Through a diverse pathway, but not totally opposite from this one, Ricardo Basbaum historically places what he calls verbal and visual agency, between the visible and the expressible. The inaugural instance, according to the researcher-artist, would be the onset of modern art – and its curious paradox. The desire of plasticity autonomy of painting coincides, as for him, with the proliferation of criticism, of manifests, and several other textual genres: "[...] XIX century men do not shut up, do not keep quiet, and start the activity, insistently and continuously, of speaking and writing of and from the image" (2007, pg. 26). Those discourses, however, traversed the works. Even the manifests, usually

very intimate with artistic objects, either preceded them or succeeded them. Only in the 1960s, the artists of conceptual matrix, already knowledgeable of Marcel Duchamp's experiments, would have found conditions to "compress the gap". Plastic sign and verbal statement would be linked, as simultaneous and differentiated parts of the artistic creation. Basbaum declares: "[...] statements and visibilities start to confront themselves at the same time, same space, in a mutual and combined action, as parts of a same process: the word migrates to the inside of the work" (pg. 31, my italics). This displacement comprehends, as points out the author, the texts of artists (whether be theory, essays, aphorisms, testimonies) and, specially, what interests us here, the employment of the word as "part of the work's materiality" (pg. 32). The word is then part of the work of art.

I have tried, in this section, to understand what, in Richard Long's maps, would make them hot. Summarizing, I reaffirmed that maps are always representations, even flawed and imperfect, but I realized that, in the best case scenario, they manage to draw closer politics and poetics, analogy and metaphor. On the same frame of mind, they preserve space and memory. Because of that, and their power as language and documental role, maps seduce artists – and they are reinvented by them. Creative works that look like maps reaffirm the peculiar condition of geographic instruments: not quite images, not quite concepts. However, in Long's maps and Jailton's sign, the ambiguity is accentuated. The words rise to the foreground, and start acting as images. The operation coincides precisely with the intense movement of incorporation of texts by the contemporary, conceptual artistic production since the 1960s. In the artistic works that embrace statements, as well as those that resort to the cartography appearance and its logics, the word sets up the work itself. The wall – interesting blindness - that so far had been holding verbal and visual elements apart falls to the ground.

Thereat, there is another question that must be asked: what would be so private in Jailton Moreira's map that does not appear in the same manner in maps of other contemporary artists, not even in Richard Long's?

I have already called attention to the agency between map and text, and between text and image: what are read, in Quintino, are not random words; they are names, and they do not describe exactly phenomenon or journeys, as in Long's. Words, now, are anchored in space. They take over immobility like a Foundation stone. They assign not only people, but also authorize to locate their homes, the place where they lived. In this equation, first name = person = location.

Ultimately, it is still worth to emphasize that the conjunction between words, people, and places settles on one very particular object: a street sign naming the street, which, traditionally, also brings people's names and localization. The simultaneity takes place as tribute. Street names revere deceased people. They were, usually, illustrious ones – sometimes more or less known - that the city council aims to praise. Naming a street means social distinction. Quintino Bocaiúva, for example, was a journalist, lawyer, and politician who played an important role in the process of proclamation of the Republic, in the second half of the 19th century. Today, it also names the neighborhood where he lived, in the city of Rio, besides streets in Porto Velho (RO), Juiz de Fora (MG) and Porto Alegre.

Regarding signs and their symbolic power, it can be observed that there was nothing random in the homage by the agents of the progressive political field to Rio's city councilwoman Marielle Franco (PSOL), naming street signs identical to the ones used on real streets, the name of the assassinated councilwoman. The same way, it was not randomly that these hypothetical signs disturbed considerably the more conservative politicians. During the campaign for governor for the state of Rio de Janeiro, former judge Wilson Witzel (PSC) insisted on posing for photographs next to supporters that had destroyed, publicly, one of those signs.

Metaphorically, it is as if a simple street sign – even if that street never existed in fact – had the power to preserve memory. To break the sign in two consisted in an allegorical and futile attempt to erase her.

From the beginning of this article, I have been listing a series of variables that I will repeat once more. All of them, in some way, will have helped to configure what excites me so much in Quintino: memory and erasure, mourning and release, representation and failure, recurrence and demand, space and map, map and word, word and image, politics and poetics, analogy and metaphor, name and place, homage and distinction, recollection and erasure... all these terms come up in pairs, perhaps one should be more precise and not say in dichotomies. What I have been trying to elaborate, the notion that a work of art can activate a place, it would behoove us to think of overlapping, coincidences, shuffles.

Jailton's statements seem to lead us also in this direction. Much more than a mere document, than simple source of information, the interview presents itself as a stimulating path of reflection and even of theoretical formulation about the creative act. Through the artist's speech, as mentioned before, we hear the expression to activate a place. To activate carries within the meaning of counterposition and resistance facing the erasures of the past. To activate is equivalent to retake what the urban memory – public, collective – has left behind. In this perspective, to activate is different from representing, to activate is what stimulates recalling, with no presumption of replacing. The disparity comes from another distance, a precious one: the one that separates place and space. The artist says:

conceptually, we can think like this: can a place be reassembled? Can we rebuild a place? I know that space we can. But a place, can we? I think that there is a difference between these two concepts. [...] for me, place is lived space, it is the perceived space through a body, an eye stuck to a body, an eye with a memory, a history, and anthropology. Can we do this until what point? This work of mine answers these questions. At least that is my answer: 'No. this cannot be rebuilt. This can only be activated'. [...] when you activate something, you are not replacing anything, you are not representing it. If I represent, I put something on the place. If I draw a façade, of a street, it is no longer the house; it is something in its place (VERAS, 2006, pg. 185-187)²⁰.

20- From the original in Portuguese: "Conceitualmente, a gente pode pensar assim: um lugar pode ser remontado? A gente pode reconstruir um lugar? Eu sei que espaço, a gente pode. Mas lugar, pode? Acho que há uma diferença entre esses dois conceitos. [...] Para mim, lugar é o espaço vivenciado, é o espaço percebido através de um corpo, de um olho preso a um corpo, um olho que tem uma memória, uma história, uma antropologia. Até que ponto isso, a gente pode recompor? Isso que esse meu trabalho responde. Pelo menos essa é a minha resposta: 'Não. Isso não pode ser recomposto. Isso só pode ser acionado'. [...] Quando tu aciona, tu não está substituindo nada, tu não está representando. Se eu represento, eu boto uma coisa no lugar. Se eu faço um desenho da fachada, da rua, já não é mais a casa, é algo no seu lugar" (VERAS, 2006, p. 185-187).



As for me, I believe that it is worthwhile to point out that activating comes from overlapping of words (first names) and map's visual codes (representation of a space), and this imbrication becomes powerful – through the same object where this meeting takes place (street sign).

The process, obviously, was only possible due to a significant amount of information, remembrances, and affection connected directly to a space, transforming this space, according to the artist's concept, in a specific place. What comes to the surface, activated by the work, is not the place itself, erased from the concrete world, but its remembrance, only dormant in the memory of the ones who roamed through there.

I don't know for sure what is that I'm thinking, but I believe that the images of the place remain as something that comes to people's memory, without a clone. It is when art stops representing and starts presenting. We no longer want to see a double of the world and start seeing some things that are within the world. This difference pleases me. To believe that I am not representing, that place is unrepresentable (VERAS, 2006, p. 187, my translation)²¹.

21- From the original: "Não sei se estou certo no que estou pensando, mas acho que as imagens do lugar permanecem como aquilo que vem na memória das pessoas. Sem um clone. É quando a arte deixa de representar e passa a apresentar. A gente para de querer ver um duplo do mundo e passa a ver algumas coisas inseridas no mundo. Essa diferença me satisfaz. Achar que não estou representando, que aquele lugar é irrepresentável. (VERAS, 2006, p. 187).

The logic seems to suppose another juxtaposition, one that has intruded throughout this article, even not having being thoroughly explicit: it is the coincidence between place and memory, or, if you prefer, between space and time. The idea, in a sense, dialogues with a complex formulation by Doreen Massey. When revising the long epistemological and historical journey that usually positions space and time with forces, more than distinct, antagonistic (in which one of them, sometimes the idea of space, sometimes of time, is overpowered by the other), Massey proposes another model of perception. She suggests that we think of space and time as if they were "mutually imbricate", as one single thing, a "product of interrelations". The core of her argument is that both are equally irreversible: it is not possible to go back in time, neither space (2015, p. 184).

After detailed dialogue with exhaustive collection of references, Massey culminates this proposition with an example at the same time plain and trivial: a visit, done by herself, after prolonged absence to her childhood home in Manchester. The author realizes that, during the course, she seeks to meet again not a known geography, but a lost period: "certainly, it was as much as a time travel as a space travel, but I lived that moment as a trip to the past". The illusion originated from the findings that it is not only time that passes and transforms itself: "[...] but also place that change, and go on without you". It is more than that: "a mother invents new recipes". At the end of the trip, the return to the home-space turns out to be as frustrating as the return to home-time. "When you get there, the place will have proceeded, and you will also have changed", compares Massey. "[...] we can't make places stop" (2015, pg. 183-184). If the house is similar, in the physiognomy, childhood is no longer present. The narrator in Dom Casmurro remarks that, in a context

not entirely different from the British researcher, there is indeed something irrecoverable in the attempt to meet again the home where we have spent the youth: "I, myself, am missing and this gap is everything" (MACHADO DE ASSIS, s/d, pg. 22).

I finally realize that: Quintino signals not only the erasure of a space or a period of time – both now remote, distant, inaccessible. Perhaps, it is not the case of evoking a place and its memory; there is, before that, the chance of activating the point where these two vectors, place and memory, mysteriously integrate themselves over the street blueprint, as well as politics and poetics, or metaphor and analogy. Place, as Jailton proposes, emerges as lived space, space with memory. I suppose that, under the blue sign, when and where no longer separate themselves. They are mutually imbricate, juxtaposed, a product of an interrelation.

Home memories and public sharing

In the initial part of this article, I tried to discuss a particular way of forgetfulness: the one that is necessary, so that we no longer brood over the past and its resentments, and that we may move on forwards. This corresponds, if I have not failed, to a sort of mourning work. It provides what could be called a relative erasure: memories, insistent ones, would find, at last, a poetic form – a more evocative than representative dimension, and we could experience, with that, some relief. This is the moment to forget in order to be able to think.

There is a second notion of erasure that has appeared through this paper, and it deserves, finally, to be enunciated: the space and time which the blue street sign seeks to activate correspond to a place and time that no longer exist. They were both subsumed, annihilated. The dismantlement is justified by the alleged need of expansion of the city and its businesses. Progress, efficiency, modernization imposed themselves as insurmountable elements. To hold on to that block, that neighborhood, seemed to be a silly and useless romantic attempt, solely a nostalgic appeal. In the official discourses, common sense or in the columns of big newspapers, the urban transformations come up as advances, not only inevitable, but, overall, awaited. The march cannot stop. It is necessary to tear down the old architecture to attend the urgencies of today's life.

Fortunately, the place that was erased is only a photograph on the wall – and an image in the memory. In that particular case of Quintino's neighborhood, I would dare say that, at least for now, the remembrance is not quite collective; it regards preserved affections, recollections, and information by a specific group of people: the ones who knew the place, who had been there, and, specially, the former dwellers of that place. In this case, Jailton, his mom, his siblings, family, next door neighbors, Alfredo from the corner house.

Once more, Jailton's avowal about the construction process of the work offers a stimulating path to approach the relationship between art, memory, and erasure of what I seek to investigate. He tells me that – after having forwarded what I have called work of mourning, having appeased the demands, assimilated the references, and gathered life acquisitions – the work was, finally, delineated. On a sheet of white paper (the blue street sign would surface only 4 years later), Jailton wrote down the names of people in his family and of the whole neighborhood, disposing them, graphically, according



to the exact position each one lived, home by home. The denominations would come without any type of grid or box, only words, names, in the configuration correspondent to a street blueprint, a bird's eye view, panoramic, of Quintino Street between Cristóvão and Marquês do Pombal streets, between the mid 1960s and the first half of 1970s.

There were, then, two tests. The first one, Jailton showed the notes to a very close person, companion in the adult life, who did not know that block from childhood. The enthusiasm was null facing the possibility of artist work taking shape there: "you are taking a dead end. You are going further to the side of incomprehension". Further on, during a family luncheon, the artist showed the scribbled piece of paper to his mom, sister and brother. Almost immediately, 15 to 20 seconds later, his mom recognized it: "it is Quintino Street!" The sister and brother, too, almost right away, joined the remembrance exercise. Jailton says: "we remained for a good long time reading the work, reassembling, fixing a few minor flaws: 'I remember that in that house lived also such and so other person'. I was extremely thrilled. It was wonderful to do that with them, it was hot" (VERAS, 2006, pg. 184)²². The expression – underline – is exactly the same as he had used in his enthusiasm for Richard Long's map: "It got hot" (p. 184).

The heat that surfaces from this brief narrative coincides very precisely with the notion of "community of feelings" coined by Maurice Halbwachs. In his renowned essay that characterizes memory as a collective phenomenon, the French sociologist highlights the relational character of our memories. According to this assertion, the individual, alone, could not be able to sustain for long the images that would come from the past. He would need some support from others to format the recollections, even the ones he considers more personal, more intimate. Halbwachs remarks that we need to resort to testimonies to complete and also to reinforce or even to discard what comes to us: we are never alone (2006, pg. 29).

In the game of memories sharing, like the one Jailton proposed to his mom, and siblings, the group strengthens or reanimates their own feelings of identity. The group becomes even closer. This is what Halbwachs calls "common heritage of memories" that consolidates the awareness of what is gone, what was –and if it still is – part of something (2006, pg. 39). Following his train of thought, Jailton confirms, in his statements, how much his family's endorsement would have been important to launch the concept that later on he would call Quintino: "I really started to think that the work could be" (VERAS, 2006, pg. 184, my translation)²³. The emotion experimented in the family context seemed to authorize the artist. The domestic approval opened path for the art.

It is important to stress that I do not identify in this work, narcissistic penchant – selfishness, self-referentialism – so widespread among certain contemporary artistic production. I do not perceive here neither the "excess of subjectivity", which Sarlo complains about (2007), neither the "intimacy tyranny", rejected by Senett (1988). Quintino is not, at all, a personal journal that is publicly exposed. The work only functions when meeting the other, even though, this operates in different manners.

From the interview with Jailton, there are four possibilities of understanding the meeting with Quintino that came up, in a schematic, though efficient way: the first would be passion, in the sense of total understanding of what is at play, however limited to those

22- From the interview originally in Portuguese: "A gente ficou durante um bom tempo lendo o trabalho, remontando, corrigindo algumas pequenas falhas: 'Eu me lembro que nessa casa tinha mais tal pessoa'. Fiquei super-emocionado. Foi gostoso a gente fazer aquilo, foi quente" (VERAS, 2006, p. 184).

23- From the interview: "Realmente comecei a pensar que o trabalho poderia existir" (VERAS, 2006, pg. 184).

who shared with the artist the experience of having lived on that block, that is, his family and neighbors; the second would be a more intellectualized understanding of the work, what unravels from a more accurate examination, some sort of investigation; the third possibility would be that the artist would only realize from his interview, that someone would activate their own place of childhood, if they would be willing to evoke mnemonically in a similar way to that in Quintino; and the fourth possibility could arouse indifference, the feeling that there is nothing to be understood in such an enigmatic artistic object.

I believe that it would be relevant to scrutinize each of these modes of understanding, even if briefly. The first, of the immediate and passionate manner, does not understand only the artist and his family members (“my mom got it”). In the interview, at some point, I asked Jailton: if the idea had already worked so well during Sunday lunch, why not be satisfied with the heat of that meeting? Why transform graphic notes in a work of art, to be shown in public? The artist offered a very convincing answer: “perhaps, I had thought of the other people on our street that could show up at the exhibit. Instead of four or five people from my family, maybe it would be 30 people” (VERAS, 2006, pg. 186, my translation)²⁴. Fortunately, the neighbors could also recognize the sign and the shared and lost place. The common heritage of memories would redo their ties. For Halbwachs, the “feeling of identity” is what he calls a chance to fortify and radiate oneself.

The second mode of understanding, the more intellectualized, is that one which I have spoken longer throughout this article: it comprehends the modes of operation of the maps (the street blueprint) and its overlapping of words (people’s names), as well as other issues here discussed: representation, cartography, agency between space and time, between place and memory.

Thinking of this visitor, the artist came to the format of the street sign. At some point of the interview, he referred to this configuration as a *mise-en-scène*, something that perhaps would be unnecessary if the work had been directed exclusively to family and neighbors. To these people, it would suffice a sheet of paper on the wall. A street sign formalizes the idea in a more presentable way, better done than sketches on paper, and, traditionally, it reminds of a specific place that pays homage to someone who does not exist anymore – it reinforces the conceptual elements that are present on the map and the words. Jailton calls that “tenuous clues” that allowed the recomposition of the past by who was not there, but at the same time mistrusts what would be its excessive literality:

when the idea to do the sign came, it seemed that the work was going to become obvious, almost literal, even though, today, it remains, for most people, absolutely foggy. I was even afraid of how literal I think the sign is. I wanted to be a blue sign, with bulging edges, placing it high on a wall corner in the gallery, just like a street sign. I think that whoever goes there and doesn’t know anything about this conversation, something, at least he could get the idea of a street sign (VERAS, 2006, p. 186)²⁵.

24- From the interview: “Talvez eu tenha pensado nas outras pessoas da rua, que poderiam aparecer na exposição. Em vez das quatro ou cinco pessoas da minha família, talvez fossem 30 pessoas” (VERAS, 2006, p. 186).

25- From the interview: “Quando apareceu essa ideia da placa, me pareceu que o trabalho ia ficar quase óbvio, quase literal, embora hoje ele permaneça, para a maioria das pessoas, absolutamente nebuloso. Eu tinha até medo do quão literal acho que a placa é. Eu quis que fosse uma placa azul, abaulada, pegando na galeria uma quina de parede e no alto, tal qual uma placa de rua. Acho que quem vai ali e não sabe nada do papo, alguma coisa, pelo menos uma ideia de placa de rua, pode ter” (VERAS, 2006, p. 186).



The third mode, in which the visitor feels stimulated to recreate his own version of the work, I discussed it in my original approach to Quintino, almost 15 years ago, and I will not return to it (at that time, I even sketched a general scheme of my childhood block, at Ganzo Avenue, Menino Deus neighborhood, in Porto Alegre, and then I focused on a presentation of the home itself, juxtaposing spaces and times, with indications of comings and goings of each person, their presences and absences, separations and deaths).

Finally, the fourth mode of understanding of Quintino points out to an extreme. It serves as counterpoint to the exciting experience of those who had the immediate and intense understanding of the work, due to a previous knowledge, linked to information, remembrances, and affections from the past. They are the ones who do not understand anything, because they lack, exactly, the necessary experience. Jailton ponders:

maybe, what interests me today is a qualitative, not a quantitative issue. Since I can't make art for everybody, and I can only do it for one, two, three people or for my family, is it worth to negotiate these "all" that will never be reached, for the intensity of three or four people? I think so. The price for this is indifference from most. But I don't think it is such a high price to pay. Is it worth it? Yes, it is (VERAS, 2006, p. 186)²⁶.

26- From the interview: "Talvez o que me interesse hoje seja uma questão qualitativa e não quantitativa. Como não posso fazer arte para todos e só consigo fazer para uma, duas, três pessoas ou para a minha família, vale a pena negociar esse "todos", que nunca são atingidos, pela intensidade de três ou quatro pessoas? Acho que vale. O preço disso é a indiferença da maioria. Mas eu não acho que seja um preço alto a se pagar. Vale a pena? Vale" (VERAS, 2006, p. 186).

Obviously, it is not the experienced of a past that lacks to the indifferent majority. There should be, if not the interested dedication hoped from an art critic or an art historian, a slight curious disposition. "Perception", according to the artistic work of Catalan Antoni Muntadas (Barcelona, 1942), "requires involvement"²⁷

Lastly, I must emphasize something from the public dimension that Quintino would have activated. The blue street sign has no epic ambition – heroic, hieratic – of urban memorials, such as the ones that are fixated in strategic points of the city in honor of the martyrs, and other emblematic characters in local history (or mythology): generally, works of spectacular dimensions, explicit allusions, sometimes subtle and metaphorical, of episodes and people who we wish to inscribe in the official narrative. The piece conceived by Jailton was not even installed in the same place it intended to evoke. It is not, in this sense, a site specific. The sign is not and does not need to be inserted in the original space that it corresponds to. It is not only a place of memory, a place that, according to Pierre Nora, contains in itself "the will to remember": a space that wishes to stop time and hinders the erasure work (1993, pg. 22). It is, as noted before, a place in the memory not from the memory.

In opposition to great commemorative milestones, Jailton's sign is like a memorial for an infamous place, because it has no fame: a memorial for something with no great reverberation in the city's public memory. In this sense, Quintino is a domestic

27- The work called Attention: (Atenção:) (just like that, with colon followed by nothing else) consists of a public warning, with white letters over a red background: " Attention: perception requires involvement". It is presented in different languages, according to the country it is exhibited, and on different supports, sometimes in small posters, sometimes in huge backlights, some, in monumental lettering. The first version goes back to 1999.

monument. Just like in Richard Long's map that registered events apparently non-important, trivial (a gust of wind, a rock, the landing of a bird), in Jailton's sign there is not any famous or truly distinct type, such as Quintino Bocaiúva or, perchance, Marielle Franco. There one can see only the artist's family members, and their homey nicknames, and the people from the neighborhood. Quintino talks about a memory that interests almost no one, condemned to erasure due to its irrelevance in the urban arena.

In some measure, it has to do with the notion of "underground memory" proposed by Michael Pollak, which is not bringing to the surface memories of political, social or economical persecuted or underprivileged minority (1989). These are the memories that run on the margins, deserving some nostalgic register, as something belonging to another time, like the story of the suburbs Bentinho intended to write. There is a stance beyond those, in Quintino.

One last note, by way of conclusion

Certain artistic objects, when we see them again sometime later from the initial contact, tend to disappoint. The appreciative spectator, dumbfounded, ask himself: "why did I like it so much? What moved me?" Most likely, the work of art – book, music album, painting – has not altered in any way. What has changed is the subject who observes it. Luckily, he will still like it as much as he did previously.

On the other hand, sometimes, the object surprises us with contours and questions never before aroused. Usually, there is an anachronism that follows images, their incredible possibility of anticipation, and update, which I believe that also in this case, the ones who suffer deeper transformations are the ones who experiment the work.

When revisiting Quintino, almost 15 years later, I still relish in what excited me the most. During the journey, though, I revisit myself. I do not feel disappointed with the younger researcher, but I try to identify what he had not thought yet, or the issues he had tackled: specially the questions of space and time, place and memory, memory and oblivion, perception and involvement. Poor Quintino... Certainly, other questions await us, beyond the obvious deepening of the ones I have outlined here. In the present endeavor, luckily, I will have confirmed Jailton Moreira's blue sign as one of my favorite examples.

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