

## **As is painting so is , by Cauê Alves**

Text written for the exhibition Áporo.

Solo Exhibition held at Galeria Marília Razuk, in São Paulo. From May, 16th, to June, 15th, 2013.

Cauê Alves

Throughout history, Horatius (c. 20. a. C) *verse ut pictura poesis* (translated in the title above) was often quoted, every time painting and poetry are compared. The connection between these two is old and generally associated to the mimetic function, even though each one imitates nature based on distinct substance: either paint or word. Despite the unity of arts and their common principles, painting and poetry sought sometimes to delimit and sometimes to blend their own fields in relation to other areas. After a long period in which painting was demeaned for not being part of liberal arts, at the renaissance Leonardo da Vinci went on to say that painting was superior because it was universal, since sight needs no interpreter.

Beyond dispute, beyond the historical and philosophical debate on the differences and similarities between color and language, Mariana Serri makes painting in tune with poetry, but not only in a mimetic sense. This interrelation was already present on her 2010 individual exhibition in São Paulo, at Galeria Virgílio. In 2012, she published paintings made in dialogue with poems written by Ângela Castelo Branco for the book *Epidermias*, in which word and image complete each another.

The Áporo exhibition results from the contact with the homonymous poem by Carlos Drummond de Andrade. But we are not dealing with mere illustration here, the painting by Mariana Serri does not intend to be a visual translation for Drummond's poetry, since the painting itself is "silent poetry", as in Plutarch's famous saying "poetry is painting that speaks". Both, poem and exhibition, start from a difficulty, from a practical impossibility, from a contradiction which prevents the continuity of thought and action likewise. This is already evident on the first strophe of the poem: "An insect digs/ digs in silence/ piercing the ground/ finding no escape".

blockaded country" at the period of Vargas dictatorship in Brazil.

"What can one do, exhausted,/ in a blockaded country,/ union of But the dilemmas in Mariana Serri's paintings are not the same as the poem's, although both seek an escape and search for a state of freedom through a concise and synthetical language. The interpretations dedicated to Drummond indicate, in the next verse of the poem, a direct link to a "night/ root and mineral?" The paintings

in social realism as that present on the book *A Rosa do Povo*, its connections to reality *Áporo* do not have a discourse as close to being more subtle.

Maybe this paralysis, just as this blockade which prevent things from happening, is more eloquent in the still atmosphere of her canvas. Everything is stagnated, motionless, even when machinery is depicted, a frequent theme on the artist's work.

In such sense, the still machines, modified and interrupted hydraulic projects, could even be a remote allusion to the paralysis of the national industry. However, the problems faced by Mariana Serri are, above all, chromatic. Even the machine are almost as an excuse for the use of various distinct colors. Like geological layers, each color surface forms itself slowly, always in conversation with its surroundings.

How to conciliate contrasting tones in the same landscape? How to soften the passage from one color to another even though they are so different? These are some of the impasses (aporias) in her paintings. Although Mariana Serri has a wide palette and uses dissonant colors, her canvas have, altogether, a calm atmosphere, despite one or another being more shocking. As contradictory as it may seem, the vibrating tones tend to pacify, as if they sought a prior harmony which unite them all, a primordial bond originary to every color.

Now, the drawings of orchides over hydraulic circuits projects, flowcharts and machine plans come from a fundamental opposition: reason, geometry, the rigidity of the line on technical drawings versus sensuality, the organic shape of flowers, with emphasis on color. Little by little, also in the paintings on canvas, the relation between background and figure becomes fluid, as if the background aspired being figure and vice-versa. The artist makes her graphic intervention over AutoCAD or handmade technical drawings, merging foreground and background.

As in the poem "*Áporo*", Mariana Serri's drawing brings forward a happy image, an exit from the labyrinth, a better future, even though as fragile as a flower. From the underground without an exit, the earth without escape, an unlikely orchid sprouts and breaks with the principles of traditional geometry. Moreover, the portuguese word "*áporo*" has two further meanings in biology, it is a green flower of the orchid family and also an insect species that digs the soil. Drummond's poem ends with the line: "in green, alone,/ anti-Euclidean,/ an orchid forms."

The approach these paintings have with poetry, as Drummond's, is not only thematical. It is not what the artist depicts that carries a poetic sense, but the way she articulates different plans, the combination of colors, in short, the way form and content are deeply entwined.

Mariana Serri's painting is close to graphic, with accurately defined outlines, remaining an assertive painting, in spite of the many questions it brings inside. Everything happens as if the very painting was an "áporo", that is to say, a problem, a difficulty, but also the natural blossoming of colors expressing their qualities to the limit.

### ÁPORO\*

An insect digs  
digs without alarm  
boring the earth  
without finding an escape.

What can one do, exhausted, in a blockaded country, union of night  
root and mineral?

And then the labyrinth (oh reason, mystery) quickly unties itself: in  
green, alone, an-Euclidean, an orchid forms.

Carlos Drummond de AndradeIn: A Rosa do Povo (1945).

\*áporo:

1 – a difficult problem;

2 – a highly specialized insect that has organs for boring and piercing;

3 – a plant of the orchid family, herbaceous, solitary, generally greenish

Translation - Tami Buzaité