

Sara Bichão

Qual é a Coisa, Qual é Ela

12.03.20 – 09.05.20

“What is the thing, what is it?”

' Sara Bichão's work triggers the meek and the violent that happens from the threshold of language. It has the duality of a tongue twister, the incompleteness of a charade, the fluctuation of a poetry, the interruption of stuttering. The space that inscribes is as luminous and solar as it is dark and devastating, with no definitive textual framework or closed narrative. "What is the thing, what is it?" is exactly it, an unanswered question, which sends us back to childhood, to the philosophical restlessness, precociously felt.

More than an exhibition, we have before us a landscape that needs to be covered in order to exist as a whole. Here and there, the meanings and signifiers fluctuate without fully adhering to each other (the tongue hangs), making us experience a kind of orphanhood of language in relation to the real. The objects, which begin to be common, soon turn out to be unusual, manifesting themselves as if they do not have the properties that we usually attribute to them: a broom that does not sweep (instead it is a vampire), a metal tube where a mouth emerges (nothing leaves, everything vanishes and disappears), a yellow umbrella that “rises upside down” or the beautiful Swiss knives, bleeding melancholy. Absolute in their lack of empathy, these objects carry plastic qualities that defy any accommodation in enclosed categories. The more incomplete the greater their lyrical capacity, the more technicians the more we feel they are organic.

“Very dangerous”, Sara Bichão describes the intensity of the physical and moral damage that some of these objects are capable of causing. Wounds, cuts, pain, asphyxiation, constriction, among others - the nature of the materials as if regulated for ethical reasons. I don't recall this kind of sharpness in so many other artists! ... In contrast, the latent animism of “What is the thing, what is it?” it can be perceived as an attempt to overcome the dualism of classical rationality, making sense of “storytelling” in the rearrangement of the relationships between subjects and objects, between humans and non-humans.

The idea of deciphering is, therefore, out of the question in this exhibition, as well as in all of Sara Bichão's work. There are keys to reading, it is true, like the glossary that the artist developed for “What is the thing, what is it?”, but nothing guarantees that it is open to clairvoyance. Each object has an irreducible grammar, the artist seems to tell us, echoing Clarice Lispector in *Água Viva* (1973): “Whoever is able to stop reasoning - which is terribly difficult - should accompany me”. And how can

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we not remember the strange universe of *O Alienista* (1882) by Machado de Assis regarding the titles of Sara Bichão? “The alienist carried out a wide classification of his patients. He divided them first into two main classes: the furious and the meek; from there it passed to subclasses, monomanias, delusions, various hallucinations”.

In this landscape, design and color play a decisive role. They are like invisible threads that give it structure and density. Sara Bichão has an unusual graphic ability nowadays, a time when drawing practically ceased to be a mediation for the realization of works of art, be they paintings, sculptures or installations. We see it as an active thought of mastery of objects, appearing to underline or soften the violence of metal, sheet metal and the sharp edges of the pieces - a symptom of an invisible world at work in materiality. As for the colours, these are distributed in a palette of soft to noisy spectrum and streamline the exhibition, creating musicality. Both can be located in brief notes (in the case of “Knives don't bite”) or constitute the “pathos” of a scene / action (as in the table located at the back of Galeria Filomena Soares where a doll is pressed - a fetish?). In this sense, colour and design are signs of performativity, rhetorical qualities of physical emotion that we often feel when seeing Sara Bichão's work. And let's face it, anyone who is truly happy or sad will hardly know how to defend dualisms or rational categories to talk about their state of mind.

“My job is affirmation and doubt”, Sara Bichão tells us. Naturally it would have to be like this: the essential dialectic that exposes and problematizes central points of contemporary art, and that above all carries forward an experience of the world full of surprises and revelations. As for us, it remains to protect us against the torture of the enigma that her work unleashes, serenely and continuously repeating “What is the thing, what is it?”.

Marta Mestre, March, 2020.