

Thiago Honório: Ópera

*There's a fierce stone,  
a boy,  
there's the look of the boy tied to the stone,  
the look of the boy, my house,  
the boy's gaze is sometimes the stone.*

Luís Miguel Nava

This opera does not begin or end in the gallery's territory.

Composed of three acts – flower, flesh, and stone – it demands a body moving through space (to go through the **Pueblo**) and through time (to go through the myth). There is neither a starting nor arrival point; there is no route. A fable with no moral lesson, Opera is at once the work and its vestige, past and future, memory, and imagination. More than twenty years ago, Thiago Honório produced a work recognized for its polyphonic character; it is unclassifiable.

By moving through the most diverse formats, there is no predefined methodology that guides its production, but a commitment to the challenges posed by its language, in the continuous exercise of expansion of the negotiable horizons of the possible.

Since then, the ancestral myth of Anahí has been central to the show. Daughter of a “Guaraní cacique” (*tribe chief*), endowed with a sweet and distinctive voice, she is said to have seen her father murdered by the Spaniards and fought to protect and free her people. When finally captured by the colonizers, she was burned on a tree that later dawned with its canopy covered in flowers of an intense red, in the shape of the flames that killed Anahí, whose coloring also refers to the blood offered for the freedom of her people. Thus, the Ceibo flower was born, today considered a national icon of Argentina and Uruguay.

Honório modeled on a natural scale 600 ceibo flowers in enameled ceramics and spread them throughout the village of Garzón. They are responsible for spraying the exposure, clouding its boundaries and contours. If the traditional exhibition space demands attention centered on the empire of vision, here, on the contrary, its Anahí dilutes our gaze of the landscape, leading us to erratic paths, and ultimately calls us to experience the **Pueblo** itself as fabular territory, by walking. Hermaphrodites, these flowers contain the male and female organs in a single fleshy structure in the shape of a club. They do not figure like tall branches, but more like wild grass flowers, fresh and fragile between light feet, in erotic suggestion. They want to embrace and burn the landscape, raise the temperature of the heels of the unsuspecting passers-by who chase them like crumbs of João and Maria; a re-enchantment lesson. Outside, they are given not only to the gallery public, curious tourists, and locals, but also to insects that roam them, cows, birds, dogs, and even non-humans or

extra-terrestrials. Plínio, the elder, told of the little birds that tried to peck the fruits painted by Zêuxis, such his virtuous seduction. Here, however, the work does not want to falsify reality, but produce a super-reality: a space in which daily life and dream are reflective conditions of mutual creation.

If Garzón is, by its own identity, a place dedicated to suspending us in time and space – a kind of geography always estranged from itself – Honório's work reinforces this dimension with a work that is a "living myth," as Mircea Eliade wanted.

Anahí affirms that being be imaginative with animals and vegetables is also possible.

Then, those who finally arrive at the gallery space find the already iconic series *Wall Painting*, begun in 2013 and has had numerous developments since then. The intense red of the flowers gives way to the red-meat of these compositions made with worn sandpaper in various thicknesses, previously used by the artist to reform his studio and residence. Its orthogonal longing grid is challenged by the organic texture of pieces that are the result of acute friction between two bodies (sandpaper and wall) – an encounter from which one cannot leave unharmed, without marks. The patterns in red and white remind the plot between flesh and fat and try to make the architecture vulnerable, giving to see its bowels or delivering wounds and bruises, in a gesture simultaneously erotic and violent.

Honório leads us to imagine this stable of the 1950s all in living flesh, denied from its history and cultural dimension to be pure body, a membrane that negotiates precariously between the inside and the outside. It would not be appropriate to call it, body-home since there is no suggestion of a soft nest here, ready to cherish and welcome. We are closer to a fragile and unprotected body, exposed to trauma, carrying with it echoes or traces of these other sanded surfaces – house and studio transported in dust debris. Ironically, his gesture makes this architecture a place somewhat "homeless: of itself, what gives a carnal aspect to the sandpaper is precisely its wear: the wound produced on the rough surface, yielding a shape built from its subtraction. "The deepest is the skin," Paul Valéry would say. Here, the depth is constructed by lack, an absent presence that leads us to finally notice the exhibition space itself as a device unrelated to any fantasy of neutrality; the subject itself; flesh.

It is important to note that *Wall Painting* refers us to the artifices of illusory visuality that make up the Baroque lexicon, using metaphorical dramatization, duplication and simulacrum as rhetorical resources, strategies delighted in the artist's production.

Finally, there is also the reassembly of *Luzia*, whose eyes embedded in the stones aim at us from afar. When he was first in Garzon, to participate in the artistic residency CAMPO AIR in 2019, the artist built a geometric solid formed by irregular stones of gray granite, collected in the vicinity of **Pueblo**, with the help of a local artisan. In it were encrusted resin eyes carved by a miner's *santeiro* (*saint*) to images of rocks and devotionals, in direct mention of the same saint. Four years later, the work is reassembled in the same **Pueblo**, in the same place.

You must walk to her, that is, wanting to see her. From afar, one can see only a hardened totem, closed in on itself while demarcating the essentially gliding landscape. More closely, a pair of eyes seems little by little to humanize the mineral structure, converting it into a hybrid of complex categorization. Now it seems to be a body hidden under the fortified structure, now a stone itself alive, full of subjectivity. Luzia is an object and subject at once.

To the extent that her eyes stare at us, making her a character, we are objectified by her vision. Like Medusa, who had the power to turn those who looked directly at her into stone, sculpture needs to give us a contour of *thing*, temporarily inverting our roles. Who's looking at who? Recalling Georges Didi-Huberman's famous passage: "What we see is worth — only lives — in our eyes by what looks at us." In the absence of a common language between stone and man, between cattle and people (given nothing free is the fact that perhaps Luzia is more seen by cows than by humans), it is still the exchange of looks a privileged (and mysterious) means of communication.

Opera places us before an aspect indispensable to Honorius' production: It does not seek to respond to the heat of events (not at all interested in presentism closed in the "here and now", for the sake of recent news). On the contrary, another temporality is proposed, more dedicated to dealing with the present as an extemporaneous condition. Echoes of the past and rumors of the future are condensed into these three acts, in this body of works or "body in works", as the artist likes to refer to, perhaps that is why they transport us in so many directions and tributaries. The meaning they build is never univocal or crystalline, and so they find in Garzon an ideal landscape, a house that holds its noisy silence, which makes it vibrate in the wind, and who knows, also the singing of Anahí.