

JOSELY CARVALHO
A NEGOCIAÇÃO DOS TERRITÓRIOS
(The Territorial Negotiation)

by Katia Canton*

“How I wish to be part of the night,
A fragment without the night contours
 Any place in space
Not exactly a place
 Because there is not position or contours
But a night in the night, a piece of it,
 Belonging at every side
And united and distant companion of my absence of to be”

(Fernando Pessoa, *Obra Poética de Álvaro de Campos*) (free translation)

Shelter is the dorsal spine concept in Josely Carvalho's artwork. Since the beginnings of her career, the artist elected the Tracajá turtle as her avatar in such a way that this tiny and archaic animal could penetrate into the most extraordinary places – real, imaginary or virtual places – carrying its own home/shell, symbolically playing the eternal human persecution for a shelter, be it physical or affective, or both.

Josely built over the years a grandiose and consistent project, sometimes accompanied by Tracajá, and baptized as *Book of Roofs*, made up of installations constructed by thousands of clay roof tiles, video projections giving body to travels and displacements, and roof tiles molded in handmade paper materialized as print-sculptures becoming virtual tiles as web pages, filled with each new experience of places, individuals, shelters. Life stories, memories of territories. It is a thread in Fluxus that never ends.

In the present exhibition, the artist opens a new path in this search, illuminated and shadowed over the daily games lived through the negotiating spaces of intimacy. What's in the scene, indeed, is the insinuation of an eroticism that combines the force of life and death, complicity and annihilation.

As we enter the gallery, a self-portrait from the artist, exhibited upside down, and a bunch of resin branches, premeditate a strong taste of strangeness exhaling in the air.

What will be the logic to be recognized between the inversion of her body and transparent branches, thrown by chance on the floor, fragile as crystal shoes?

The next photographs from the exhibition incite the possibility of a sensorial construction. An empty couple's bed reflects traces of a posthumous contact,

glimpsed by the white wrinkled sheets and dyed with a *chiaroscuro* penetrated through some imaginary crevice.

A couple of dead birds inhabit this bed.

One can think of a relationship of total surrendering, even if it's repugnant. The hole in the eyes of a bird is filled with insects and its beak still carries a lint of straw, which would be weaved to others shaping a nest.

This embarrassing sight, epitomized a communion of deaths. Side by side, the couple of birds quietly and dramatically occupy the bed, their bodies inert and decomposing but still endowed with a disturbing tenderness.

This feeling is still suspended in the photo series that takes place in the upper floor, named by the artist as *Headless Brides*. They are repeated photos in series and manipulated by editing resources, demonstrating the theatrical aspect of the wedding clothes, the impersonality of the typical image and the claustrophobia suggested by the glass windows where headless mannequins line up. In the photographs, the dreams embedded in the wedding dresses are beheaded by the commercials and in some moments, have their faces replaced by skulls and frightening masks.

There is still a constant call to the non-place. Brides inside the window shops, birds lying on the bed, branches out of the trees – everything is set out of place, reminding us of the condition of a foreigner, to which contemporary life, with its fluorescent and whirling time, inexorably situates us. We are all, in one way or another, roofless, floorless, without solidity, the work of Josely Carvalho reminds us.

The self-portrait, the transparent branches, the bed, the birds and the headless brides, - this series of images also composes an instigating amplification of solitude, that can be perceived behind the shelter. It is a poignant criticism of the romantic promise of domestic comfort. Or even a visual scream in favor of an absence of defined contours. May the night come with an undefined power of freedom.

*Katia Canton is a writer, professor and curator from the Museu de Arte Contemporânea da USP (MAC-USP).