

Studiolo XXI – desenho e afinidades

In Studiolo XXI — drawing and affinities, the artists lead us through a series of enjoyable exercises on an accomplished aesthetic excursion leading to a place where contemplation enjoys free rein and critical engagement is called into play.

The background to this exhibition involved a dialogue (mostly through written exchanges) with many of the contributing artists. It is always a privilege to revisit artists' workshops, meet them in person and hear their ideas (points of discord and affinity) and thoughts on drawing. Entering the "Studiolo" of each of these artists (and also those whose work one would like to have seen here) is a happy utopia. The works on display are, in most cases, the result of choices made following conversations with the artists, collectors and gallerists. The final selection was based on my review of approximately fifty years of drawing conceived in a wide range of contexts, converging on the definition of a *Studiolo* (perhaps *sui generis*) which is appropriate for the 21st century. Originally, the *Studiolo* was a section of a Renaissance palace which was organised such that the lord could host and show examples of "the immense variety of the world, as a metaphor of power, the possession of that which only he could have: things both of natural origin and the product of human artifice." ¹

At *Studiolo XXI* every visitor can feel like the lord of the palace. The works shown provide moments in which one experiences a slowness or a fleeting quality, dullness or eagerness, in accordance with the pace that is set or desired. The visitor feels once again entitled to be surrounded by such images-drawings-ideas, inculcating a mood of keen lucidity.

Both the cartographic notion and the *mental quality* which drawing has reside in plurality, which leads to a certain degree of excess throughout the ten exhibition halls and exterior spaces of the *Centro de Arte e Cultura da Fundação Eugénio de Almeida*. The confluence of works, arranged in an architecture charged with responsibility, will appease the craving of all agendas. We are gathered at a drawingfest that at first glance might seem unlikely. The selection of pieces for display necessarily involved the decision to include an array of disparate artistic languages and aesthetic tendencies, reflecting different tastes, hence the compulsion for dialogue between terms which may be regarded as somewhat improbable. Regarding the range of works exhibited as a whole, among the most distanced approaches, we shall highlight details and fragments that each visitor will be able to identify — as Daniel Arasse emphasised in his landmark book. Each individual has the freedom to associate details and establish dissociations or points of affinity that are their own rather than just those that are immediately apparent.

We have not sought to exhaustively cover the range of approaches to *drawing*. A few notes are provided to provide context for works which form part of this exhibition, for around 180 artists from home and abroad, most of whom have been actively producing works since the end of the 1970s.

The desire to collect is an intrinsic human trait: people accumulate things they are interested in or love, and the act of drawing is like this, and in anthropological terms, the urge to collect things is a basic motivation for drawing. Also the urge to keep things - to preserve them. And the enthusiasm for visiting public spaces, where these days anyone can, for a few moments, engage and lose themselves in the contemplation of a vast array of artworks that invite an extended sojourn or return, perhaps reflects this vital impulse.

We aim to revive the idea of the *Studiolo* for visitors to a kind of current *cosmology* of drawing. Exhibited in the halls of the *Centro de Arte e Cultura*, which open out onto gardens, courtyards and adjacent spaces, the *Studiolo XXI* artworks, address the various meanings of drawing, reaching out to those who pass by, catching them unawares; encountered in unexpected settings, the exhibits encourage the visitor to embark on any number of singular digressions and create a degree of awe - at least, so it is hoped.

Maria de Fátima Lambert
Curator

1. Giuseppe Olmi, cited by Alfredo Baratas Díaz, Antonio González Bueno, "De gabinete a 'science center': 500 años de coleccionismo en Historia Natural", *Memorias R. Soc. Esp. Hist. Nat.*, 2ª ép., 10, 2013, p. 12.