

Vague transit

*If he (the enemy) gathers his strengths he loses territory,
if he disperses them he loses strength.*

Võ Nguyễn Giáp

To Captain Cyrus Smith, hero of *The Mysterious Island* by Jules Verne, there are no aesthetical problems in what concerns the non human. The world is enjoyed for its vulnerability towards rational beings. The promontories, the ravines, the cliffs, the coves, the water streams, the thick masses of vegetation, the wild animals, the strength and topographic immobility of the territory are not insurmountable, destructive, overwhelming facts in their greatness but rather in their geological content, markers of natural history which eventually imply a mathematical problem, a trigonometric estimation, a biological examination. The territory is not an unknown reality, one that is transcendental, invisible, plunged in labyrinthine ways; nor is it tension between body and finiteness. Nothing of the sort. In Cyrus's positivism, he that is a trained engineer, the world is a referent that classifies itself, analyses itself, corrects itself and is charted to ensure clarity and discernment in decisions that involve its transformation (violation and destruction). Knowledge is possession of the natural world. The territory falls, precipitates on the plane, on the map, enduring either as beginning or as end. The real indefinable of the island is the Other, the exotic, *ex-machina*, an it, a he or a she that make the space simultaneously a kinetics of the stranger and the unexpected and the assurance that in its irrelevance, in the sublimity of its irrelevance, the human is what makes the island real, the nature palpable and life significant. It is in that something more (which does not belong in us) that lies the genesis of poetics, unwanted child of episteme and technique, and it is in it that we better understand that the human is the commensurability of the symbol. It is the voyage and the unfinished interpretation of the world. Ernst Cassirer explains this better than me: "The symbol is part of the human world of meaning". The poetics shatters in opaque, hermetical, inaccessible (euphorically and dilatorily inaccessible) signifiers the episteme of the non lived, of the inapprehensible, the outer shell of the body and the sensitivity.

It is this framework that I confer to the material of this exhibition: an exteriority that is the syncretism of another exteriority. Robert Smithson attempted to describe in his "A provisional theory of non-sites" this dislocated duality, simultaneously syntactic and constructive. The film contained in the device designed by Daniel Moreira explains this juxtaposition for it is the space (the surface, the plane) that acquires form, depth and content (in the interaction produced with the hands and the coal sticks, and in the movement of both) and which, in the cinematic that invades it, becomes itself more complex in a symbolic system where the pure realm of ideas (the abstraction of which the white sheet has a metonymical density) expressively blends with the unfathomable, undetermined kinetics of the two coal sticks.

I summoned this unionist captain and his drifting buddies created by Jules Verne while looking at Daniel Moreira's drawings and Rita Castro Neves's photographs but I was all the more convinced when seeing them heading in their diving suits towards a anthropocenic wood. The unlikely association between nineteenth-century fiction and these two artists' journey stems, nevertheless, from an intuition: there is insularity in the thick void, in the daily palimpsest that is the path. The 75 kilometer walk made of interruptions, pauses, delays, affinities and sympathies (dislocated to the conflicting field of expression and representation, of the excluded and the interpreted) presents the same premises of the shipwrecks' digression in which the savage, the unfathomable, the unknown are blurred in the exposure to the document's hegemony – the journal-like memory, the graphic register, the collection of the found, the measure and quantification of what has been done, of what is still to be done.

What these images tell us beyond their plastic quality and thematic nature is that a path has the semiotic value of an index: it enunciates a possibility of repetition, of a make it new, again, an action that blurs (or dilutes), radically, immanence and representation. It is the minority space of beings, insects, mammals, and of what is more problematic in them, the human being and the significant qualities of their lives.

The path is presented here as an authorless work, not only a line in space but in time, a confinement's duration that expands and contracts. That is what I see in the architectural quality of the bushes and vegetable masses photographed by Rita Castro Neves. The extrusive convulsion of the bushes and the cavities produced by the plethora of bows and foliage ambushes any aesthetical vision of the place, almost suggesting, as it happens in crime photographs, the scene of a crime, a violence but also the theatricality and the strength of a living totality which distances itself from our attention, our empathy: the theatricality of a real situation turned image. In Daniel Moreira's drawings we sense likewise that respiration between the void and the fulfilled, the place and the absence. The form (the trace) sinks in its own meaning, in its use; but a path is also – as the drawings show – the trace of ghosts we do not know, do not see, that have used it primarily and that left it – that use – on the ground, as a tattoo.

We imagine the place as a fixed point in space, as a phenomenological collision of former experiences and worlds (of known and unknown pasts). The word "locus" seems to define a reunion, a physical unity antithetical of dissemination, of drift, but there is no bigger "practiced space" (to use a definition that the philosopher Michel de Certeau has postulated) than a path. This interstice communicates with the traveler and juxtaposes the value and utility of its parts (the dismemberment of the experience) to any other effort. It is the beginning of a dialogue, fictitious, probable, between two points, two facts, two events. A whole ecology of interactions is based on that void: between a mummified frog and an observer that transfers it in decisive layers of graphite, irreversibly, to a meta-image; between a trawler floating in a window and architecture without an architect. The itinerancy is thus the collision and blend between two realities; namely the subjectivity that observes, de-centered, captive in the amateurship of digression, and that historical praxis, cumulative of remains and entropy, that is the path.

In Jeff Wall's photograph "Diatribes" (1985) (described by him as the wandering of proletarian maternity), two adult women appear, still in their youth, one of them holding a child. They walk along a trail framed by empty lots and a suburban backdrop; they walk uneasy, focused, within an automatism that seems to reproduce the "spatial unconscious" in which they are in. Here the rambling is the negative space-time where supervening demography of capitalism remains, where it awaits, and where it dislocates as a means of uprooting. It is the place of a defeat and of a philosophical restlessness badly replied. It is not an alternative to the working realm, an escape route, but the reminder that in the realm of production there is a between-space for the forced useless. Precisely because of that the wandering becomes conscience that we do exist, that even without work, even outside the capitalist "nomos", we are, we exist; that it is not the opposite: the world does not expect us to prove in action our usefulness. Granted, that utility, use, work (living work, dead work) makes the world present another intensity and communal, singular possibility. The houses, shelters that Daniel and Rita came across, warn us on that regard but at the same time the statistical irrelevance, the withdrawal of utility, obsolescence, the disuse cannot become surrender, cannot be fossilized in its own purpose: the dog's sleep seems to whisper that we also need to not be. The whole atmosphere of the path is sleepy, somnambular. Rita Castro Neves's photographs come close to the problematic in "Diatribes": rid of the technocracy and performativity of work, human beings, the things that animate their habits, their needs, apparent or concrete, also possess splendor and are also real. And that it is in the digression, in that anthropological instant, an instant of laziness, of diatribe, of shame but also of optimism that comes with inutility – a great aesthetical and philosophical resource – that we can understand how much human we are in regards to and because of the non-human around us.