

Abstract

This thesis focuses specifically on the articulation of sculptural field with landscape and it is based on a particular reading guided by an authorial practice. The aim was to build a meditating path around issues related to our key words which emerged from a set of plastic arts proposals created before the writing of this dissertation. In order to go as deeper as possible, the interpretation method was chosen to find outside the authorial own practice – in two works of art from two different artists – the understanding means of the concepts indicated below.

Key words: *nature, landscape, environment, body, sculpture, sculpture in the expanded field, photography, miniature, look, wandering, memory, absence, emptiness, process, project, language, space, time, theatre, aesthetics, and ethics.*

This dissertation intends to give shape to a possibility of theoretical-practical articulation of landscape in sculptural field. First, it was quite a struggle for the author creator not to fall into the temptation of commenting exclusively his own work. Another challenge was to use a method and a strategy that would enable us to be alert to the mute nature of art. Watching the mute nature of art means recognizing that the functioning of verbal language is different from the functioning of the language of mute materials of sculpture, that is, artistic practice is not translatable reliably into verbal language. The challenge was to define a method that would be as less antagonistic as possible towards the characteristic nature of art. From verbal articulation of this meditating path, we obtained better bases and action vectors for artistic and academic practice, so it was shown that, in the scope of research about art, theory and practice are not separate entities but a common field which comprises thinking and making.

The authorial works of art that instigate the study of the objects of this interpretation work were mainly “*Vontade*” 2004 (fig. 63) and “*Fadiga de estruturas*” 2005-2006 (fig. 65). The first was created before the beginning of this study but the second was during, just like “*Wander*” 2007, (fig.66) and “*MAGMA*” 2008, (fig.69, 70, 71 e 72); eventually “*MEGAPARSECS*” (fig. 67) 2012 came naturally, without any deliberate action and became the pinnacle of our meditating path. All these proposals were submitted to public and critics. Therefore, all the pieces chosen to figure in chapter V had their natural existence in the

professional world of art at national and international scale and some even participation as a finalist in several international prizes, two of which in Spain.

The two objects of our interpretation were "*La forêt*" 1950 (fig. 24) by Alberto Giacometti and "*Uma floresta para os teus sonhos*" (*a forest for your dreams*) 1970 (fig. 41) by Alberto Carneiro. Twenty years separate one from each other and yet Alberto Carneiro has taken A. Giacometti as a reference; these forests find their place in this dissertation in the way that leads to the understanding of the transformation of the ideas of landscape and sculpture. Landscape is presented as something that descends from the dilacerating division of man towards nature which explains the idea of landscape as "view" established by the Renaissance convention for space. Sculpture descends from statuary and preserved from it the idea of absence which still qualifies today the sculptural space. However, sculpture, in restricted sense, which was inaugurated by the work and writings of Rodin, lasts only a little more than half a century. In the middle of the twentieth century, the promise of including the body as part of the sculptural experience brings to memory the experiences of Russian constructivists like El Lissitzky and the Dadaists like Kurt Schwitters who created respectively the "Proun Space" and "Merzbau" in 1923. In those, a penetrable sculptural space was created, as a set of surfaces defined from inside.

Time will show that the notion of landscape as "view" will lose its validity, so a new notion of landscape based on wander was proposed. Its roots can be traced back from Modern period, who questioned the Renaissance convention, and from emergent phenomenology. This notion will be useful to understand the landscape character in "*La forêt*" and in "*Uma floresta para os teus sonhos*" (*a forest for your dreams*) at two levels respectively: the level of the sculpted object in miniature by means of the artist hand work and the environmental level which comes from a conception of art as an idea, and discipline of drawing project. A project consisting of a set of two hundred wood logs, piled up in ten different layers and displayed all over the exhibition room. These wood logs work as scene objects once they are part of a theatrical structure that causes an effect on the bodies of spectators as these are stimulated to wander, to walk through this labyrinth and at the same time they are offered an pre-cinematographic and

imaginative experience, or a dream, as defends Gaston Bachelard who repeats in the context of architecture and culture the same assumptions of an experience of immersion realized in a natural landscape.

In this process of sculpture emancipation, emptiness plays an important role as it is part of a theatrical structure which is common to both objects of our study. The spectator of “*Vontade*”, “*Fadiga de Estruturas*” and “*Wander*” walks in emptiness while his experience oscillates between two degrees of experience virtualization: the one given by the construction of a visual field in miniature whose structure is handmade with water and sand and the one which results from the act itself of walking once that a pre-cinematographic experience is being taught. Indeed, these pieces together with “*MEGAPARSECS*” work as the continuation of the ideas found in “*La forêt*” and “*Uma floresta para os teus sonhos (a forest for your dreams)*”; another thing they have in common with these is the fact that all derive from memory auscultation, which is the more creative genre of thought.

“*MAGMA*” 2008, sought the intentional articulation of aesthetics with ethics by proposing sculpture as an exercise of earth regeneration and by using in this context not only tri-dimensional sculptural interventions but also bi-dimensional ones as well. All the mentioned examples of sculpture, not only the ones that are the object of our study, but also the ones that were born from our own authorial artistic practice, testify the idea that the notion of landscape as a “view” is no longer valid for the reason that it is the cause of our contemporary problems. Our contemporary world witnesses all kind of environmental troubles. We do not fail to recognize that landscape is built by the action of man; the problem lies in the scale of that action which no longer enables earth to regenerate, jeopardizing man himself. Landscape as a “view” corresponds to the conception of the space that provoked this state of things; This notion of landscape noticed that when an individual watching a landscape is distant from the object viewed, it gives him the illusion that the landscape is an isolated window. As a result, all kinds of landscape changes are accepted precisely because the individual does not take into account that himself will be affected by nature degradation.

If for us the bi-dimensional representations of forests convey the idea of nature, in reality, they end up revealing a natural tendency for negative aesthetics. The great medieval European forest was the place of hunting, of legends, myths and monsters and that entire fictional legacy turned forest representations into the paradigms of oddness, of what is uncomfortable, uncertain and grotesque, instead of conveying the paradigm of pleasant beauty. This issue, which was approached in chapter I, is related to the practical proposals presented in the last chapter. Arnold Berleant, who is only mentioned in the conclusion of this dissertation, gives us a true clue for the articulation between aesthetics and ethics. In the opinion of this author, the idea of landscape as a “view” is no longer valid for us and neither is positive aesthetics because it is based on the detachment of the watcher from the landscape that is being watched. Instead, in order to re-attach man to his environment, Berleant suggests commitment aesthetics which considers landscape as a milieu, questioning the notion of “negative delight”. That is, because delight makes man become ethically closer to nature, it is then urgent to call his attention for actual landscapes subjugated to pollution, for the chaotic growth of cities etc... His proposal is based on the idea that when man will realize that the abyssal transformations that occurred in nature are his own responsibility, then the idea of landscape as a window will fade and anxiety brought by delight will persuade man to have a different attitude towards nature, following aesthetic criteria that will assure sustainability.