

HISTORY OF THE FUTURE MILTON MACHADO

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## THE ARCHITECTURE OF THOUGHT

Tania Rivera

*More philosophical and rigorous than science,  
and closer to the essence of the thing – that is art.*  
(Martin Heidegger)

*Art is a soft thing, that is why  
we need flexible threads to take its measurements.*  
(Milton Machado)

Milton Machado is an architect without measures and a historian of the future. Nothing less than the world itself seems to condense in his work in a pulsing and heterogeneous chaos (a bit like Borges' *aleph* where everything would be there at the same time). A closer inspection does however allow us to perceive the rigour of the logical tracing and the audacity of the poetic construction. "The expression of that which exists is an endless task", as Merleau-Ponty says.<sup>1</sup> But it is not enough for the architect to express what *already* exists. Expressing what exists is to necessarily construct the world (and its time), incessantly and in a plural form.

It is therefore not about weaving a web of fiction over reality, as perhaps the majority of literature and art has done up until today. It is about revealing the very structure which sustains the relation between thing and language and lays the foundation for our illusion of homogenous reality. Just like in music, it is about a work of signifiers, reordering dominions such as those of rhythm, harmony and melody. Perhaps this is in some way related to Milton's passion for playing

the tambourine as part of the Tsunami drum section of the traditional carnival band known as *Carmelitas*, and to his solitary improvisations on the guitar.

It is more certain that linked to this is music's importance presence in many of his works, generally in partnership with his good friend Rodolfo Caesar (and in more specific cases with Alexandre Fenerich and Vania Dantas Leite). In Milton's poetic cogitations, it is about *playing* the world, remaking it, reshaping it. It is about it bare, or in other words, exposing the symbolic structure which partly coincides with the language system, but mainly transforms it, forcing it to surge outside of itself, pointing to the rest which overwhelms it and threatens it. This structure is precarious, fragmented and frayed like an old rag. It must be reinvented.

Just like in Drummond's world machine, we are looking at a revelation. But it does not come suddenly, sprung from the stony earth in Minas Gerais during one of the poet's strolls. Its emergence is laborious, as it coincides with a true reconstruction of the world's creational device. In the face of the possibility of its subtle revelation, the artist does not give up, and leaves, hands hanging by his sides, allowing the final answer that was offered there to be pushed aside again. He knows from the outset that there is no response and so sets to work; the thought deepens the furrow in the muddy ground and stirs its clods, remakes world and question, knowing that it will have to repeat the operation a thousand times, each time slightly differently. The artist is the very machine of the world.

<sup>1</sup> Maurice Merleau-Ponty.  
*Sens et non-sens*. Paris:  
Gallimard, 1996, p. 21,  
my translation.



In order to overturn the world like this, it is necessary to simultaneously construct a narrative and go beyond any narrative, subverting it. It is impossible and pointless to fall back on the old blanket of modernity with its great and unequivocal narratives. And as there is no History, but many varied and ever-partial histories, all history, instead of narrating facts, reveals in its telling its own power of *generating world* (which echoes Hélio Oiticica's idea of *world build world* without the latter constituting an identifiable direct influence on *History of the Future*).

The symbolic is a game, a gamble. On reading Lévi-Strauss, Lacan announced that "the unconscious is structured like a language" because we are part of a game of signifiers which produce intersubjectivity. This is how our reality is built, like in a game of paper, stone, scissors. Structure is an unpredictable game and not an immutable system. Structure is machine: it generates world and is therefore focused on the future, it is only completed *afterwards*, just as the meaning of a phrase is revealed after it has been uttered, retroactively. The unconscious similarly ignores the passage of chronological time – under its power the past did not fall behind, but continues pulsing in the present, tracing future narratives (which Freud calls *fantasies*). The temporality of the unconscious is that of *only-afterwards*, of retroaction. The past throbs and demands (re)construction, it never stops retaking on meanings retroactively, and sharpening its arrow for the future. We reinvent our histories of the future daily.

Without a guarantee of the previous fact already produced in a definitive manner, every history becomes a parody of itself.

#### THE TRICK

"Magic's charm is in the trick, not in levitation", Milton affirms. The trick is subtly revealed, and the great magician voluntarily becomes an actor of farce, a manipulator. The artist often parodies others' magic and the most sacred of illusions to reveal the trick.

In recent video *Vermelho* (2009), a red metal sign is reinserted at the painting stage of the production line for an office furnishings factory.



In a closed and perfect system where items yet to be painted circulate, suddenly the monochrome relents to make the industry into painting, ironically conversing with art history. The pictorial tradition is thus fused with industry, forming two sides of the same coin. And the poetic intervention overturns the conditions of production and reception, playing with the relations between subject and object. The red item, which had already been through the painting process, returns to the circuit to be reinserted as a species of observer. What was an inert and industrial object, fruit of a production line, becomes something else, becomes a subject-painting. At the exhibition at the Nara Roesler gallery aptly entitled *Produção*, the sign was exhibited like a screen beside assembled chests of drawers of the same colour, piled up with half-open drawers forming a kind of set of stairs (*Pilha*). "The sign was an element of production and the furniture a product", said the artist. "Each of them spying on the other."

The artist is not interested in producing objects – not even potent objects such as those ready-made, capable of questioning the importance of art in industry. It is in the artist's interest to produce cracks, slight perturbations capable of exposing the whole system. Shelves and

(previous page)

**PRODUCTION [PRODUÇÃO]**  
Installation, detail  
Galeria Nara Roesler  
São Paulo  
2009

**RED [VERMELHO]**  
Photography  
100 x 150 cm  
Video, with Caca Vivalvi  
from PRODUCTION [PRODUÇÃO]  
Installation  
2009

units from the same factory were also assembled in the hall and used to organise works previously displayed in their respective collections while metal plaques stood in their place. During the exhibition, buyers or visitors were invited into the exhibition space itself and not a reserved office, and staff eventually needed to go there to tend to works by other artists represented by the gallery. Everything which is normally outside, supplying the socioeconomic framework which sustains an exhibition – storage, commercialisation, negotiations between players in the game, became part of the “production” by the artist himself. It constituted, in Milton’s words, “a means of re-stimulating the object of the circulation, bringing it back to production.”

The insertion of a dissonant element in the industrial production circuit seems to converse with Cildo Meireles’ *Inserções no Circuito Ideológico*. The message “Yankees go home” traced on a Coca-Cola bottle or the “quem matou Herzog” stamp on *cruzeiro* bank notes are strange elements in the production process of these objects, but they maintained, at that particular moment in the country’s history, an evident ideological relation to opposition. The circuit worked by Milton decades later seems divorced from any ideology. It is not so much about insertion as *distortion*: internal elements are employed in such a way to invert the circuit itself, forcing it to work against itself, or rather leading it to reveal the system which is normally hidden under the primacy of the result and the final product. It is about, to use Milton’s term, *shaking up* object and production and art consumption systems.

*Shaking up* a system means investigating and exploring it, performing or mimicking its operations to invert them and reveal the trick, the bind at which we find ourselves immersed to the point of it becoming natural or us becoming blind. Every system, such as those of industrial or artistic production, is configured in relation to the order of the Symbolic, the dominion of language to which we are inexorably submitted from the outset. Milton works language and the reality it accommodates so as to simultaneously reflect on art, man and the world.

With this he seems to align himself with Joseph Kosuth, for whom art has taken up contemporary questions on man and the world which

philosophy has failed to answer. Milton Machado is one of few artists in the world who do in fact perform such a philosophical task, which Kosuth himself ended up avoiding for the sake of a reflection more on art itself and less on the subject and the world. Milton does not share the belief which would in his opinion sustain Kosuth’s proposition that it is possible to investigate the “nature” of art itself to arrive at its “truth”. Art has no truth. Art itself is not therefore capable of arriving at a meta-art, and neither can a philosophical theory provide a definitive explanation. Milton thus sets to work to say this of theories, not to adopt them and apply them but to make them into something else, something belonging to a *fun* and often, plastic, thought. He does in fact erase delimitations, invades boundaries and shakes both the expectation of an artist’s work and a philosophical reflection. His activity as a university professor with a PhD in Fine Arts and as a researcher at the National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (CNPq) is not totally secondary or contingent, but demonstrates the hybridism so fundamental to his proposition.

#### FUN

Art is not evidence, data, an image or an object. It is a search, or rather: an *investigation*. But it is about *As Férias do Investigador*, as the title of the 1981 work affirms, and the thought becomes a source of *fun*: that which twists reveals the verse and diverges from the consecrated version.

Milton thus blends erudition and slang, investigative rigour and jazzy improvising, irreproachable and *batucada*-driven logic. The artist-investigator on holiday “takes a break from his commitment to truth and mocks it suspiciously”. He creates scoundrel paralogics, exploring the possibilities of subverting the language. Among these, the *diaphora* device highlights his thought’s concern with questions which have marked art since Raymond Roussel performed *Impressions of Africa* in 1919, influencing a whole generation of writers and artists and notably, Marcel Duchamp.

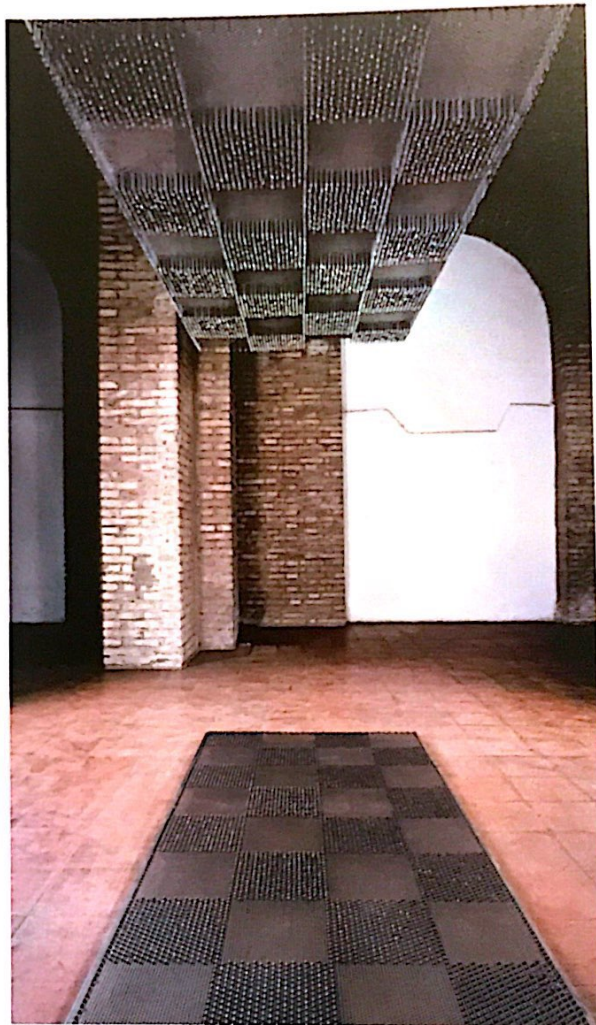
Diaphora is the figure of speech present in constructions such as, in Camões, “novos mundos ao mundo irão mostrando”. Roussel radicalises the device at the beginning of his work, using multivocal



terms such as *bande* (indicating the side of a billiard table vs. a criminal gang), in the almost homophone phrases "les lettres du blanc sur les bandes du vieux billard" and "les lettres du blanc sur les bandes du vieux pillard", using them to construct a narrative beginning with the first and finishing with the second. Even though the phrases are almost identical, the semantic distance between them is huge: the first phrase refers to letters written with billiard chalk on the sides of an old billiard table; and the second, a white man's letters on the old thief's gangs. Such a difference suggests that it is only retroactively, at the end of each phrase, in its last word, that the meaning is precipitated. The tongue is not entirely submitted to the meaning, but is primary material for a game, joke or slip. Through the homophony, the signifier takes the lead over the signified, introducing discontinuities in the field of meaning and constructing a truly fantastic, as it is almost impossible, imaginary situation at the limits of language.

Roussel himself revealed, just before committing suicide, the method that would have guided the construction of part of his works, characterising it as an "essentially poetic procedure" which would also be a relative of rhyme.<sup>2</sup> After a short period of literal application, the procedure would have evolved so as to lead the writer to extract a series of images of dislocation from any text. A text, in order to be written, should be the object of distancing and diversion, conjuring images at the limit of the imaginable. For Michel Foucault, Roussel "does not want to duplicate the real with another world, but, through spontaneous language redoubling, *discover* an unsuspected place and *recover* things which are yet to be said".<sup>3</sup>

The revelation of the procedure is curious and slightly disturbing. The writer evokes the objective of presenting the method so that others might benefit from it, but this fails to convince. The discourse of *How I wrote some of my books* is not outside his works, but forms a sort of double, making it thicker, endowed with verse and the reverse. But he does not allow us to interpret or understand the work. I believe that the revelation thickens and reinforces the enigma, because it invokes the very opacity of language, the point at which it does not mean

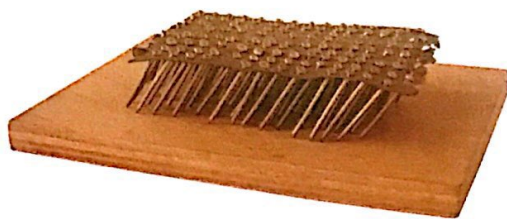


2 Raymond Roussel.  
*Comment j'ai écrit  
certains de mes livres*.  
Paris: Gallimard, 1995  
(l'imaginaire), p. 21.

3 Michel Foucault.  
*Raymond Roussel*. Paris:  
Gallimard, 1992 (folio/  
essais), p. 25.

4 Marcel Duchamp.  
*Duchamp du Signe*. Paris:  
Flammarion, 1994, p. 41.

5 Marcel Duchamp.  
*Notes*. Paris: Flammarion,  
1999, p. 141.



**DIAPHORA (DIÁFORA)**  
Sculpture  
Perforated steel sheets,  
steel nails  
100 x 200 x 300 cm  
Sala Uno, Rome  
1990

**DIAPHORA (DIÁFORA)**  
Object  
Perforated steel sheet,  
copper nails  
10 x 18 x 4 cm  
1989

anything – which is exactly the point which may provide its poetic force of always saying something else.

Duchamp, in a note on *The Large Glass*, affirms that: "The diversion (*l'écart*) is an operation".<sup>4</sup> An operation of minimum differentiation (*infra mince*, he would say) which allows him to create word play such as "un mot de reine / des maux de reins".<sup>5</sup> And it leads him to apply diversions to images and objects as well as words, in a large number of his works.

Milton Machado refers to "diaphoric traces" as "rogue similarities", constructed as "approximation and identity through distancing and differentiation". *Diáfora* is the title of a series of sculptures begun in 1990 with an iron rectangle perforated by nails in only part of its surface, forming a checkered pattern. In the version made for the exhibition in Rome also in 1990, the same procedure is carried out on two steel sheets, mirroring the pattern of the gallery's checkered floor. "The squares of the Roman-style floor tiles produce a diaphora in relation to the square forms of the nails in the sheets", notes the artist. It is not the object he created which is conceived as a diaphora in relation to the floor pattern, but the opposite: retroactively, the existing tiles form a diaphoric relation with the object. Milton continues:

Filled holes vs. empty holes. Squares filled with nails vs. squares empty of nails. Supported sheet vs. hanging sheet. Sheet sheet, nail

nail, hole hole, serve as the exemplary phrase: *Il sogno della mia vita è perdere la mia vita*. Vita vita, life belt, nail hole, and so on.

Coincidentally, the Roman tiles were of the same dimensions as the squares in the iron sheet, which the artist roguishly refers to as "divine intervention". A third *Diáfora*, presented in São Paulo in 1993, "incorporates" the geometry of the existing elements: a table, a sheet, modules, suggesting an ironic recovery of the concretist heritage in Brazilian art. Milton further affirms:

But I also like to observe these sculptures for what they are, plastic objects which make little noises. *Diáfora* is a little noise.

To a "philosopher of the excessive" the trip is necessary, as is the diaphora, (which in Greek refers to difference and dispersion and also may assume a connotation of exile). He forces the measurements and the borders of a certain territory, creates difference and invents another place which we travel through if we are strangers (a place in the future, perhaps). The real presents itself retroactively as something produced by language, by the symbolic, but which as a species of chiasmus, was already there. The evidence is not in the past and in opposition to the present, but in a former future: once fictionally constructed by the artist, it *would have been* the real.

The diaphora condemns our condition of being strangers to language, passengers of words (just as in a bus or on a boat). For a second this reversal of language places us outside the word and perhaps for an instant places us closer to the real, in its nameless excess. The diaphora makes the same different, makes *an outside* within the utterance only to integrate it again – but pays the price of becoming *an outside* itself in the process. Transforming itself. Twinned with happiness, it makes more said than what is said, invoking the depth of excess which the meaning covers and limits. It is therefore probably of interest to the "Investigator on Holiday who only works overtime" as Milton says, "more the excess of results and responses than correct measures."

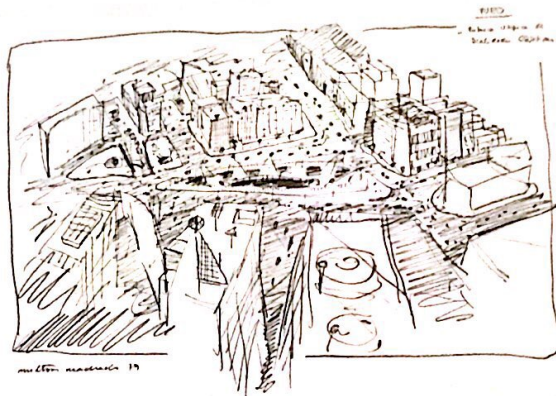


The artist affirms that the poetic is always over the top. Perhaps there is actually something excessive in his work – this is what leads him to characterise himself as a “philosopher of excess”. Such excess becomes an allegory for Walter Benjamin: it is excessive in its implication of dispersion and fragmentation. It is never about symbolic representation in its fables and fictions, but poetic operations which undermine any possibility of deciphering them. Unlike a metaphor, in which the name of something is transported to something else – according to Aristotle’s classic definition –, the allegory is present in the transference of the name of something else to something else in a game which calls into questions the very process of meaning (the artist might therefore write that “all of HF’s worlds are metaphorical; but without the Imperfect World and the Perfect World as metaphors, it wouldn’t be possible to say what the More-than-Perfect world is a metaphor of”). A metaphor of the metaphor: the word slips and it is impossible to touch what it is about.

Without references outside of itself, *history* is born from a catastrophe and may only be counted as a history of the future. The sense is nomad. The representation only refers to itself and therefore any investigation into meaning will be *fun* – there is no correct version. The immobile (in the video *Edifício Galaxie*, a video to come in various versions since 1975 and 2003) becomes mobile and vice-versa as I have just given them the same name. The language itself is an area of twisting, dispersion, *diaphora*.

#### HISTORY OF THE FUTURE, OR THE WORLD: USER GUIDE

*History of the Future* is not one of Milton’s experimental essays from what he refers to as his “satirical essays”, but the *magnum opus* which everything will in some way touch on. The satirical device becomes scientific discourse, or rather, science fiction. The artist is charmed by the possibility, proposed by a specialist, that he might come to materialise in a game. A psychiatrist à la Machado de Assis in *The Alienist* might consider this to be a delirium, but would chase it away with the precision of his systemisation and might perhaps



conclude that it was a successful delirium, or in other words, a perfect mockery for bumpy reality lived in madness. A delirium capable of removing its author from madness and lock up all those who continue to believe in the little part of reality (as Breton would say) which sustains the precarious empiricism of our daily lives.

A work from 1978 conceived while the artist was attending a specialist course in Urban Development (before he began his Masters in 1980), starts by locating, in a map of the centre of Rio de Janeiro, the form of a hole in the urban space: the enormous abandoned foundations of a building on Avenida Nilo Peçanha, a skyscraper announced at the time to be the largest building in Latin America. Milton interpreted these underground ruins as a ruler’s centre of rotation, spun by a flick of the finger until it stopped and determined a direction – in a reference to the arbitrary character of many decisions made in urban planning. The line obtained pointed to five constructions that artist proposed for destruction: part of the warehouses at the port, the Perimetral Viaduct, the Candelária church, the Gustavo Capanema Palace and the Museum of Modern Art. This kind of “negative utopia” formed



6 Jean-François Lyotard. "Philosophy and Painting in the Age of their experimentation: Contribution to an Idea of Postmodernity." In *The Lyotard Reader*. Nova York: Wiley-Blackwell, 1989, p. 186.

7 Walter Benjamin. *Obras Escolhidas. Magia e Técnica, Arte e Política*. São Paulo: Brasiliense, 1994, p. 232.

8 Lyotard. *Le Post-moderne expliqué aux enfants*, Paris: Galilée, 1988, p. 27.

U.F.O.R.  
Utopian Factory of  
Objective Realities  
[F.U.R.O.  
Fábrica Utopica  
de Realidades  
Objetivas]  
Drawing  
ink on paper  
23.5 x 32.5 cm  
1978

the *Fábrica Utopica de Realidades Objetivas* (Utopian Factory of Objective Realities), abbreviated as F.U.R.O. The reality would thus be fabricated thanks to the construction of holes; it is only objective in so far as the object is loss and ruin (unexpectedly echoing Ferreira Gullar's non-object).

The foundations of the "Lume Hole", as the area came to be known, are like the "pillars of the new world" in *History of the Future*. For Milton, it is an "example of a history of the future" that all of the points marked would come to suffer radical transformations, and in some case veritable destructions, such as the burnt Museum of Modern Art, and the current project forecasting the abolishment of the Perimetral and the port quayside. The Candelária church was the object of (abandoned) plans to move it; the Gustavo Capanema Palace has seen its function and identity change many times. Something punctures time and transforms the urban space: from fictitious proposition to real destruction. Something is repeated, always current and able to produce the past and future. After all, as Lyotard says in an exemplary lesson for any reflection on contemporaneity and the post-modern, "we ought to admit to a multiplicity of our time".<sup>6</sup>

History is not an accumulation and a systemisation of facts, but the movement at which reminiscence is appropriated, the flash of a former catastrophe, as Walter Benajmin said. History (re)creates holes, catastrophes, ruins. A fact only becomes a historic fact "posthumously, thanks to happenings which may be separated from it by millennia".<sup>7</sup> The historian's task is therefore to capture and show the configuration of this moment in which its own time comes into contact with a former time. Meanwhile future, as a philosopher might point out, would be the time in which the door to the Messiah remains half-open.

The reflection of *History of the Future* thus breaks any messianic logic, revealing that there is no more salvation on the horizon of time. The former catastrophe will continue to reproduce itself in the future, indefinitely, creating a new world each time. History is a game, almost a videogame, in which we risk our lives and have to make choices – few, within a pre-fixed range. We might succumb naively, simply await death, such as Those Subject to a Vulgar Death. Or flee in despair, such

as the Sedentary, producing the opposite movement to that of the symbolic machine: delving into the depths, believing in steady ground, in a reality separate from the game and able to resist its effects. Or we can take the roguish strategy of accompanying our own game, following the rhythm of its movements. Rolling like a little sphere is the figure of the Nomad, the emblem of the artist.

*History of the Future* goes on display in Gibellina, Sicily in 1991 when, according to the artist, "HF's fictions are once again submitted to productivity tests in the laboratories of the real". The strange experience of imbrication between fiction and reality and time reversal is thus repeated. Coincidentally, the city had been completely destroyed by an earthquake in 1968. "If my fictions have passed the test, and if my analogies have proven productive, the brave inhabitants of the great More-than-Perfect City Gibellina might well exemplify my Nomads", Milton says. Not so much a starting point for fiction, the real is a terrain where the confirmation is given of the operativity of the symbolic functioning which may only be reconstructed with plural fictions. There is no total overlap between the real and the symbolic, between world and language. As Lyotard says, "it should finally become clear that it is not up to us to provide reality, but to invent allusions to the conceivable which cannot be presented".<sup>8</sup> The inventor of the conceivable, or Milton Machado's Investigator (on holiday) does not believe, as a scientist does, that we might arrive at an ultimate real thanks to the experimental validation of his hypotheses. He doubts that there is no ultimate reference to which hypotheses must be adjusted. Therefore, the satire-scientist makes the real itself from the laboratory, at the limit (without limits, of course) of his fictional "productivity". CQD: fiction creates the real.

Coincidences between fictional inventions and the real are therefore both fortuitous and non-fortuitous. There are flashes (to quote Benjamin) stemming from the appearance of occasional similarities, reactivating the past and retransforming the present (starting with the future, or in other words, fiction). However such flashes are sparks unable to catch fire. They do not permit the development of discourse

capable of organising them into a coherent sense (as astrology has been doing for millennia with the sparkles which we see as stars). They do not authorise a doctrine such as that of mimesis or metaphor. Such coincidences are like winks which the magician subtly throws at us, revealing the artifice of his exploits. They momentarily reveal the structure, not through the demonstration of a unified whole, but through the fragment, the random. You cannot grab the symbolic and spread it out over the table: it is up to it to invent nomadic ways here and there and slide through holes like geological faults. The symbolic is bumpy, and caught in its mesh we sometimes fall into another era, in a momentary glimpse into another world.

"Only a flexible, mouldable, adaptable project may deal with contemporary perplexity – plastic", Milton affirms. He concludes: "and with satire's plasticity, as Lyotard suggests". Satire is an instrument of *sphericity* and of nomadism. The satirical procedure makes the world itself malleable (plastic). According to the logic of satire as proposed by the French philosopher, to be able to speak of what is supposedly needed and immutable, it would be necessary to adapt to it by adopting its very rigid and stable style – but without believing in it. In other words, some kind of twist or diversion takes place, and the discourse condemns a flaw, an inconsistency – in the symbolic, the world, or art. For Milton Machado, the term (art) must be written this way between parentheses, to "affirm relativity, contingency, the interval and modular nature and the insular character of the territory", as he affirms in his response to Guilherme Bueno in a recent interview. An island should throw down bridges and eventually dream of the complete union of Pangaea which the artist read about in 1978 – when it failed to pass a hypothesis – and situated itself as the starting point for the construction of *History of the Future*. However it should also assume its insular and precarious character, submitting itself to the parentheses which hold it in suspension: far from the world, outside – only for a moment – meaning, ready for the catastrophe which will destroy all the dykes and separate it forever from the continent, only for the bridges to be constructed again until the system is destroyed, and the process goes on to repeat itself.

*History of the Future* teaches that the symbolic alternates between destruction and construction. It destroys perfection and the ideal, destroys bridges with others and then reconstructs them. Our "city", man's home, our *ethos*, is not fixed and secure. As Freud said, man is no longer the boss in his own home; and as Nietzsche said, God is dead. We are not on solid ground with the symbolic, and we do not even fly thanks to the capable hands of a pilot. With language we do not create roots, but are in exile (in *diaphora*). Not just because we lack a predetermined place, but also because the structure of language itself is not immutable: its motor is a Destruction/Construction Module which endlessly executes cycles. The Imperfect World is related to the perfect city, but such an antithesis does not make the More-than-Perfect City its synthesis. There is no final resolution which reconciles opposites. The More-than-Perfect is an invention, the artist says. A *necessary* invention: "I had to invent it so that I could speak of the Imperfect World and the Perfect World. And to be able to look at those worlds in *perspective*, as though from a distance". Art is forcing a distance, forging a perspective which allows us to see the world. Art's *only-afterwards*. After art, the world (art perhaps always constructs histories of the future).

In its unlimited scope, *History of the Future* also reveals itself to be a history (but an upside-down one, of course) of art. Sculptures, classic forms and refined materials are dislocated from the formal tradition to become characters: the beautiful black sphere is the Nomad, the portentous empty cube, enormous iron grid is the Module of Destruction. This is more or less like a child squashing a piece of bread in their hand, setting it on the table and saying to a friend, to begin a game: this is Superman, or this is my horse.

#### **WITH THE SUBJECT, AND NOT IN FRONT OF YOUR EYES**

"*History of the Future* is about its *exteriority*", Milton Machado affirms. It is about the world. Art is outside of itself. After all, according to the reading given by the artist on Benjamin's concept, "the aura is the inside on the outside."



<sup>9</sup> Jean-François Lyotard, "Philosophy and Painting in the Age of their experimentation...", op. cit. p. 190.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 189.

The idea of an exterior united with the interior is fundamental to contemporary Brazilian art, as in Lygia Clark's *O dentro é o fora* (1963). Moebius' strip, a unilateral topological figure, is employed by the artist in *Caminhando* (1963) to permit an existential journey through time ("the act of making yourself is time", the artist says). The only work carried out in a partnership between Clark and Hélio Oiticica takes up the unilateral ribbon and places it around the fists of two artists in a *Diálogo de Mãos* (1966). Hélio's *Parangolés* generally use strips of fabric or other materials, twisted like Moebius' strip, fulfilling his plan to appear as a "transobject", an object within the body and outside it, in that which we wear and look at.

In Milton Machado's work the thought itself seems to twist and subvert Moebius' strip. The diaphora is also a twist of this kind, in the bosom of language. Perhaps Milton tugs Moebius' strip to expand its exteriority and make it an *Homem Muito Abrangente* (A Very Far-Reaching Man), as affirmed by the title of a fine performance in 2002 in which a knife-thrower hits his target several times within the contours of a body drawn on the wall, while the artist, his assistant, writes on the wall in charcoal: "A man so far-reaching that he occupied the whole world except for the space of his own body could make an excellent assistant for a bad knife-thrower."

The *Homem Muito Abrangente* is almost whole. But he is missing something: his very interiority. He does not possess individuality and "therefore not even an appearance", as the artist affirms in a text on the subject. It is about an impure, hybrid, plural subject. He is "outside limits" and his "body is all pores", as affirmed by the title of the text transcribing a conversation between various characters such as Pliny the Elder, Leonardo Da Vinci, Pico Della Mirandola and David Lowe, among other "friends". The body is not internal, it should not be considered as a "closed and isolated entity", but as a "relational 'thing'", "created, delimited, sustained and finally diluted in a spatial-temporal flux of multiple processes". The body dissipates itself to encompass the multiple relations with others and with the world.

To follow the movement of the Module and save itself from its own destruction, the Nomad in *History of the Future* should, in the

infinitesimal pause before the system recommences its cycle, "negotiate a position". Such negotiation between the Nomad and the Module of Destruction implies difference and the relation encompasses all kinds of games, such as affecting/being affected, tackling/being tackled, crossing/being crossed, negotiating with, etc. This is our *ethos*, our ethic: negotiating with the symbolic demands a certain flexibility, demands *sphericity*, so to speak, and nomadism (in other words, implies a choice for exile, a refusal of sedentarism). In a twist fundamental to HF, the artist suggests that the Module of Destruction is not the motor powering the whole system, as we affirmed above. The Nomad is the motor of the symbolic. "Penetrating (etc. etc.) the Module of Destruction, the Nomad makes the whole universe (i.e., HF's fragmentary universe) move (makes the universe run), transforming it."

And we are the Nomad, facing/within *History of the Future*. It seems to draw a parallel between the work and Lyotard's affirmation that "these essays, just like these phrases are made 'within being' and not in front of our eyes. Each work presents a micro-universe; each time the being is nothing if not each one of these presentations".<sup>9</sup> A little like Flaubert affirming that "Madame Bovary, c'est moi", we should, although slightly confused wager that *History of the Future*, *c'est moi*.

We are "within", although in exile, in diaphora. *History of the Future* thus denies us the central yet unrestricted position necessary to make of it a "treaty" (something which, according to Lyotard, "incites arrogance"<sup>10</sup> – an arrogance which, in philosophers, transforms into metaphysics). The (re)inventions I have outlined here should be perhaps taken as More-than-Perfect Cities which the Module of Destruction has already begun to annihilate. Be that as it may, faced with the absence of definitive treaties on art and on the world, it is up to us to definitively define the artist as a *fraud*.