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JORGE MARTINS' DRAWINGS: AN UNCONSCIOUS CHALLENGE AND AN ADVENTURE OF CONSCIOUSNESS

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Abstract: This approach to Jorge Martins' drawings, based on conversations with the artist, intends to glimpse a certain underlying essence of his artistic activity. This mind-body symbiotic activity was associated with poetics, presuming that it facilitates immersion in an idiosyncratic truth. Thus, an understanding of drawing was sought as a means of sensitive exteriorization through the association between the awakening of unconscious reality and the reality of consciousness – having as a bridge the unreality of the imaginary as a metaphor for the essence of reality.

Keywords: Drawing, mind-body, poetics, unconscious, consciousness.

INTRODUCTION

What follows is the result of two interviews with the artist Jorge Martins, in which we talked about his thinking about his own creation of drawings. Jorge Martins (Lisbon, 1940) began his research through drawing in 1958, having held several exhibitions since then, of which we can highlight the 1978 at the Center Georges Pompidou in Paris and the 2018, *Sombras y Paradojas* at MEICA in Badajoz.¹

This dialogue was assumed in an intersubjective context, so it was not intended to make the subjective objective; rather, it was intended to establish a dialectic in the relationship “interviewing artist – drawings – interviewed artist”, where the interpretation was developed according to a subliminal intuition about what one thinks and feels about the poetics of drawings (to which JM also associates a musicality). It was, therefore, an intersubjectivity understood in the sense of empathy in which it is possible, in the words

of Goldestein (in Fiorini, 2004: 86-7), “put yourself in the place of the other and feel like him, how it can happen in imitation and, with greater complexity, in identification”, in the sense that, adds the author, there is a “fantasy of [subliminal] transposition of meanings from one to another.” Therefore, the drawings were not approached in the sense of a recognition that is closed in the exteriority of physical realism, or rather, of what is perceptible by the senses, but rather in the sense of a knowledge that is open to the interiority of a certain unrealism of representation, as fiction, in which the approximation to a certain realism of the sensitivity that this representation awakens is established.

This phenomenon of an interior-exterior relationship fits into JM's premise that drawing is always a form of knowledge of the outside, of reality, of the world, of the universe; but it is not mathematical, not physical, not historical; it is an artistic knowledge, which is as valid as other types of knowledge.

Artistic drawing as knowledge, according to JM, has many bases of knowledge (observation, psychology, etc.), in his words, “it has to do with millions of knowledge that come from different directions”; indeed, it suggests that it is knowledge, at the human level, that is vaster and deeper than scientific knowledge. Artistic drawing is, for JM, a form of knowledge in general that allows a certain awareness and, consequently, greater clairvoyance, when conditions are created for greater proximity between action and thought or, in JM's words, in which it is possible to be closer to the neurons and, at the same time, to reason, emotion and instinct.

¹ Some drawing exhibitions to highlight: 2013, *The Substance of Time* – Museum of Contemporary Art, Serralves Foundation, Porto. Dessin, Kogan Gallery, Paris. 2008, *Project Dessin 2002-2007* – Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, Paris. 1995, *Drawings* – Cocoran Gallery of Art, Washington. 1989, *Dessin* – Galerie Gilbert Brownstone & Cie, Paris. 1988, *Drawings 1957-1987* – Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, Lisbon. 1983, *Jorge Martins, Black and White, Drawings* – Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, Lisbon. 1978, *Jorge Martins, Dessins, Ateliers Aujourd'hui* – Musée National d'Art Moderne – Center Pompidou, Paris. 1958, *I Contemporary Design Salon* – Casa da Imprensa, Lisbon. (among many other exhibits).

THE MIND-BODY SYMBIOSIS THAT ENHANCES THE CREATIVE INTUITION OF DRAWING

The exposition of this reflection on the creation of drawings by Jorge Martins is contextualized in the fact that the artist recognizes that artistic creation, in terms of drawing (but also painting), is a phenomenon of mind-body complementarity in which the artist he feels that he has the world in his hands, as, in his opinion, the creative process is an experience of “extraordinary freedom”. Which, given the manual nature of drawing, converges with Bachelard’s idea (cited by Pallasmaa, 2013: 18) when he states that “even the hands have their dreams and presuppositions” and, he adds, “they help us to understand the deepest essence of matter,” concluding that, “that is why they also help us to imagine [shapes of] matter.”

Jorge Martins reveals that his creative process is instinctive and intuitive (since ideas or solutions arise without having thought about them), but also rational, because he likes to think about what he does; in fact, he confesses that sometimes he gets irritated when some idea or solution instinctively appears to him and he would be happier if he had thought of it. Despite this, he thinks that in the impetus of drawing, in the connection between the brain and the hand, the rational and the irrational assume a rebalanced importance, in the sense that in the drawing process there is no rationality of thought without (irrationality of) action, hand and body.

Deep down, it can be suggested that in drawing the rationality of the process is behind the action of the hand, assuming this action-thought in the sense of Brun’s idea (1991: 175) that “the eye understands form” and “the hand knows her.” But, above all, and according to JM, we can think that, when the body inscribes forms on a support, as the

forms “pass through the body”, the mental and the corporal balance each other and both become important. in the process of inscribing the shape in the drawing.

It is in the field of this dynamic of apparent mental/body ambivalence that JM reveals that, in his creative process, the initial concept or idea begins (like what happens in a game of chess) with a set of elementary gestures from which one can to diverge to something without interest or to something wonderful and full of surprises, in a certain tendency of possibilities that can be infinite. This in the sense that JM says he does not pre-establish a goal; instead, he successively creates surprises for himself, contradicting any reproduction of pre-established ideas.

In JM’s opinion, the immediacy of the technical process of drawing allows, in particular, to better explore the bifurcation and variation of possibilities of form, in his words, “almost in a musical sense” in which thought is constantly challenged. But it is also, in his opinion, a proximity (since there is no great technical mediation) between thinking, acting and representing, which results, as a result, in greater ease in clarifying the structuring of thought.

Regarding this idea that drawing allows for the clarification of thought, JM refers to the dialogue between Socrates and Diotima (in Plato’s Banquet), when she says that art, or artistic creation, consists of a passage from non- to be to be. The artist clarifies that he understands that non-being is what is in a perception, it is in a concept that does not yet have a formal reality, and, in turn, being is the formal reality of the concept. This passage from non-being to being, according to JM, takes place at the same time with instinct and with reason, so it cannot be just instinctive or just rational. It is a passage in which, according to the artist, the idea that does not exist in concrete comes to exist, starts to have

a physical reality, starts to have a reading (be it a poem, a text or a drawing),

This “non-being – being” transformation process, in the artist’s opinion, can result in a greater deepening of the form or the idea, whenever one has a certain ability to approach the poetic side of the form. This poetic approach “of the emergence of form”, as corroborated by JM, can provide an expansion of consciousness, in which (corroborating the suggested idea) there is a coming and going between reason and intuition and in which drawing occurs without being aware of the why this appearance. However, JM points out, this condition of unconsciousness can only last a second, as it will immediately tend to become conscious or aware, in addition to allowing the triggering of awareness of other ideas, while recognizing that not all the forms that arise are fertile.

Bearing in mind that, as JM says, artists (and people in general) have an analytical and rational or conscious (but not necessarily deductive) thought, also in the particular case of his painting he is confronted with this analytical need (to know rationally what is more or less, what is missing, what needs to be eliminated, etc.). But then, in the intervals of transition between acting and resuming action, this analytical and rational attitude is transformed into a synthetic attitude that obeys a certain instinct and a certain intuition – which, underlines JM, in the drawing takes place in an even faster way.²

In a way, in the drawing of figure (1) that follows, we can see a certain contrast between the random and the directed; a contrast that triggers a conciliatory and dialectical dialogue, in which one can glimpse a successive rational

2 Jorge Martins reveals that, particularly in drawing, when he is thinking, “he is thinking of several hypotheses”, pondering which is the most appropriate; but when he is working he chooses a solution (the color, the brush, the pencil he wants to use) and doesn’t hesitate between two or three; and if, by hypothesis, he hesitates a second before, it means that, he alleges, there has been a change in the way of thinking. On the other hand, he warns that “when you move on to action and think about the options to choose” it is bad, for example, he refers, in the case of painting, the shapes have to appear already with their color, advocating that the Painting is not colored drawing, since forms have their own color a priori. From this point of view, says the author, when one hesitates between several hypotheses, none is good; but, on the contrary, when one imposes itself, it is a good sign.

reformulation of meanings, depending on whether one is surprised by the effects that one discovers in terms of the (dis)order of the body and the mind, and in which these converge to the strength of a representation that JM would probably associate with an equation where the forces of instinct and reason are consubstantiated.



Figure 1. “Pororoca”, 1988, graphite on paper, 70 x 78 cm.

METAPHORISM AS QUASI-OBJECTIVITY THAT ENHANCES THE EXPRESSION OF THE SUBJECTIVE

The prosaic is a matter of describing and narrating accumulated details and elaborate relationships. The poetic reverses the process. It condenses and abbreviates, thus giving words an almost explosive energy of expansion. (Dewey, 2008: 272).

Focusing on the poetics of JM’s drawings,

the aim is to understand how it can allow the artist to “speak” of a deeper truth, that is, assuming poetics as a potential means of more effective and direct expression of knowledge - which encompasses the conscious and the unconscious - in a more “expansive” and “explosive” sense. To this end, the act of expression is facilitated by the immediacy of the symbol.³This type of association of meanings allows for a more spontaneous relationship between the objectivity of the drawings (as a perceivable object) and the subjectivity of the sensitivity that reorients the process of materializing the idea in the drawing. This is based on what Mumford says below:

*Art represents the inner and subjective side of man; all its symbolic structures are so many efforts to invent a vocabulary and a language through which man can externalize and project his intimate states and, more particularly, give a concrete and public form to his emotions, feelings and intuitions of meanings and life values*Mumford (2001, p. 32).

In this perspective, and before the suggestion of the idea that a possible symbolism potentiates (and is potentiated by) the interrelationship between the rational exteriority of graphic construction and the interiority of the sensitive orientation of exploring this construction, JM understands that drawing “requires ” a complementarity between the objective nature of rational thought and the subjective nature of the sensibility projected onto it. We can take as an example figure (2) that follows, where dichotomies are not established, but rather a search for intrinsic complementarity between objectivity and subjectivity. In this case, we understand that drawing is associated, more than with the conventionalism of a symbolic

character, with the (unconventional) freedom of the metaphorical, subjective and dynamic connection between objective realities.



Figure 2. Untitled, 2003, graphite on paper, 120 x 160 cm.

Based on Goodman’s (2006: 105) idea that “the metaphor is most powerful when the transferred schema gives rise to a new and remarkable organization, rather than a re-labelling of an old organization” and in relation to the hypothesis that metaphor can be an element with which one can poetically approach life experience, JM corroborates the idea that drawing can be a metaphor of what he thinks. But, as an alternative to a formal metaphor, JM prefers Paul Valéry’s notion when he says that the artist does not look for forms, but forces that help him create forms – which for JM is a founding idea. Regarding this thought, note the drawing of figure (3) that is showed below:

³ “The symbol is always a product of an extremely complex nature, since it is composed of the data of all psychic functions. The consequence of this is neither rational nor irrational in nature. It certainly has a side that is accessible to reason, but also a side that is inaccessible to reason, since it is composed not only of data of a rational nature, but also of irrational data of internal and external perception” (Jung, 1921/2008 : 559).

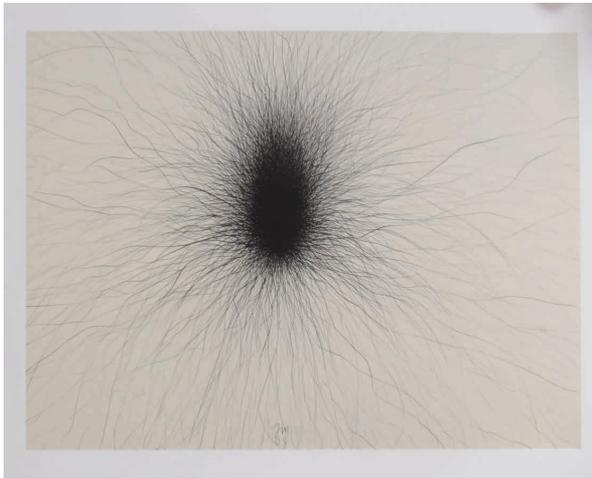


Figure 3. "Blake hole", 2008, graphite on paper, 120 x 160 cm.

Faced with the possibility of understanding drawings as an approach to the poetic senses of reality, JM suggests that artistic drawing, more than a metaphor, "is an archetype of reality." In this sense, when JM appreciates drawings by other artists he feels that art is beyond reality, it is something stronger, it is a meta-reality, it is an epitome of reality.

Jorge Martins considers, therefore, that art is something broader than the reality we have before our eyes. And it is in this sense that he understands that art, in addition to being a conjunction of philosophy, science and psychology, has a poetic character, in the sense that, evoking Friedrich Novalis' statement, "poetry is the authentic absolute real." Also in this regard, JM evokes Nietzsche's statement when he says that "we have art in order not to die for the truth", warning, however, that Nietzsche did not consider that art was a lie, but neither is it the logical-deductive truth of science.

Thus, it can be suggested that, instead of this rational truth, the artist immerses himself in a logic of emotions whose externalization raises (self)awareness. Or rather, artistic expression

will allow a liberation of the unconscious truth at the same time that it awakens the truth of the conscious. We consider, therefore, that the processes of the unconscious are very important⁴ in the phenomenon of artistic creation, in the same sense of JM's opinion that in art the conscious and the unconscious and what is rational and what is irrational are equally important, they are not in competition, rather they are complementary.

CONCLUSION

This reflection described the context of what Jorge Martins thinks about his artistic creation of drawing. In the same, the idea was evident that in the symbiotic mind-body activity of drawing one can explore according to a process of poetic synthesis, assuming that this is what facilitates the immersion in a deeper truth. Thus, the drawing process was described as a means of exteriorization, of a sensitive reality, dependent on the rationality of the construction process. This expressive medium makes it possible to release an unconscious reality through the metaphor of thought. This in such a way that the result can substantiate an artistic knowledge whose truth translates into an absolutism, more comprehensive than scientific truth, when it gathers in itself a diversity of knowledge assimilated in the rational and irrational relationship with the world.

⁴ "The unconscious processes turn out to be much more important, contrary to what one might assume or want to assume: if before the emergence of consciousness there is a whole physical functioning to be carried out, functioning established in temporal terms, then many of the present aspects in this functioning, or even all, may not see the light of conscience" (Alves, in Dinis & Curado, 2007: p. 64).

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