

We cross the density of time

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Lucas Dupin's main topic is time. He spreads and stretches the work of art's temporality, developing an organic and multi-shaped work, marked by photography, installations, watercolors and video-performance.

In 2017, the artist proposed a discreet performance in the public space. In the city of São Paulo, he cut, restlessly, many pieces of paper under the eye of surprised pedestrians that were on that long avenue. During 8 uninterrupted hours, he carved the spaces out of the calendars in the heart of a huge city where 12 million people cluster on a daily basis. At the crossing of the avenues Paulista and Bela Cintra, the figure dressed in a white shirt merged into their surroundings. Lucas Dupin easily blends into the pace of the city: sitting at his office, surrounded by hurried business people, he takes the necessary time to build a work in progress.

During a trip to Brazil, I found a great amount of hanging papers. They inhabit the exhibition space. Other small pieces cover the floor, forming a pile of rectangular and square pieces of paper. On that day, I reassembled the puzzle: these fragments were used to fill the empty gaps of the floating shapes. The empty calendars of *Time-Reverse* induce a metaphor; that of a time subjected to flaws, to holes in the memory. Lucas Dupin breaks down the years, months and days. He removes the memories to reveal the skeleton, the temporal structure. At the same time light and dense, this installation disturbs us for its simplicity: the calendars overlap on the floor, the pile of paper translates a temporal density. The name of the artist, of French expression, calls my attention. I ask myself if some day I will be able to meet him.

Days later, I leave the great urban centers and go up the Atlantic coast towards the state of Bahia. Passing by Belo Horizonte, Lucas Dupin's hometown, I follow my itinerary. Lucas was exhibiting his work that same day, at one of the city's galleries. Just a few kilometers apart from each other, we still didn't know we would soon meet. December is a very hot month in Brazil. In Bahia a new world is unveiled. Dodging a red lane that runs along the coast, a car stops and

tries as it can to avoid the wide open holes that dot the road in poor condition. I talk to an artist that, sitting at a table in the garden, gargling the flavours and colors of the small village of Cumuruxatiba, had come from Belo Horizonte, capital of the state of Minas Gerais. He talks to me about his work. At that moment, the planets align: the artist is Lucas Dupin. I had noticed his name before, as I visited the exhibition. It seemed that the quite unlikely encounter with Lucas was the result of a succession of logical consequences in the scale of time and of our respective wishes. Our paths had to cross. This insolite story resonates in the sensitive cartographic experiment developed by the artist. As this journey restlessly explores time layers, I strangely find myself in the heart of a *mise en abyme*.

In the photographic series *Equivalences*, Lucas Dupin uses the metonym as a creation procedure. He perceives that the Portuguese cobblestone pavements, a style that dates back to colonial times, are disappearing from the Brazilian urban areas. These cobblestones incorporate the stigma of a time. Replaced by another type of material, the missing stones channel a summoning of memories. The pieces of meat presented one in front of the other by the hands of the artist, suggest sacrificial flesh and colonial past. Another golden stone appears as an analogy, a change that recalls the construction of the ostentatious Baroque churches of the 18th century, the slaver century. In the last image of the series, the hands disappear and the new ground is revealed, amplified by the foreign form, a piece of meat or gold. The juxtaposed disposition of the images reveals a chronology and makes the process of the artist visible. The audience becomes a privileged witness.

Lucas Dupin turns invasion into a recurrent and modular theme. The artist gets inspired by the vegetable world, as in the installation *Suspended Gardens*. In between the fragments of the very same portuguese cobblestones, intrusive moss and tiny plants spread around. This device distills Brazilian History one more time in the heart of the artwork, the story of wild lands domesticated. Once Brazil has been an immense virgin forest. Despite its domestication, threatened nature still seems majestic and predominant. Colonial iconography exacerbates an exotic perspective on Brazil: these stories have survived the times and contribute for the maintenance of a caricatural vision, yet significant. Lucas Dupin deconstructs the imaginary through suggestive poetic actions. As it uses to happen, the installation is immersive. It suggests a deambulation, a plastic conception thought for the

dimensions of the body. It's possible to tread a path among these selected parts, remains of an omnipresent story under our urban steps.

In her book "The invention of the Landscape" (*L'Invention Du Paysage*) Anne Cauquelin shows how what we know as 'landscape' reveals a mental construction. Lucas Dupin refers to this with the series *Representation Notes*. Taken from Brazilian maps, we see burnt holes on the paper surface: the juxtapositions and collages reveal archive images. What if the story of these various territories were yet to be unearthed? The construction of the poetic image by successive layers is a characteristic of the artist's plastic approach. In *Library to come* he reutilizes paper giving new life to abandoned encyclopedias. Side by side and forming an absurd and inverted library, the cut-out slices of books create a new ground, ready to receive watercolor on their relief. Tropical flora invades the books until they disappear progressively, leaving remains of their landscape in the form of dusty burns. Here, again, vegetation unfolds, the vines and stems embrace the surface of the work, the veins of the leaves embrace the encyclopedic pages. Its illegible content gives way to another use: the book becomes a receptacle, it stops being a container of words, lines, phrases, paragraphs and thoughts. More recently, the watercolor series *Bang Snaps* presents almost abstract shapes. The big colorful images remind us of crumpled paper or fabric. The change in the scale, misleads us: the enigmatic images are the result of the explosion of a bang snap. The dry snap often turns into a light little piece of torn paper, hit by the fire that it had contained for just a few seconds. The color diluted in water reveals the stealthy time of the insignificant detail.

The attentive observation of trivial objects extends to situations found in everyday life, such as in 2018 at Praça do Patriarca, an emblematic square in the history of São Paulo. At night, this place of wanderings becomes a nerve center of poverty. Every morning, the artist would observe the water trucks washing homeless people out of the streets, a demonstration of blatant and sharp violence. We see the artist in the image. He feeds the pigeons, the other inhabitants of the square. They start to follow him and get used to his intrusive presence. He then pops a firecracker. The pigeons suddenly fly. The artist repeats these actions several times. And yet, the pigeons keep coming back to the same place the next day.

In extreme opposition to the search for the spectacular, the narrative structures the story, as an artistic practice in constant dialogue with a poeticised

real. The works of Lucas Dupin translate a simbiosis: as he matches poetic images and historic narratives, the artist manages to discreetly unveil the flaws of a tangled memory and weave a suggestive and polyphonic narrative.